

PLUCK AND LUCK

COMPLETE
STORIES OF ADVENTURE.

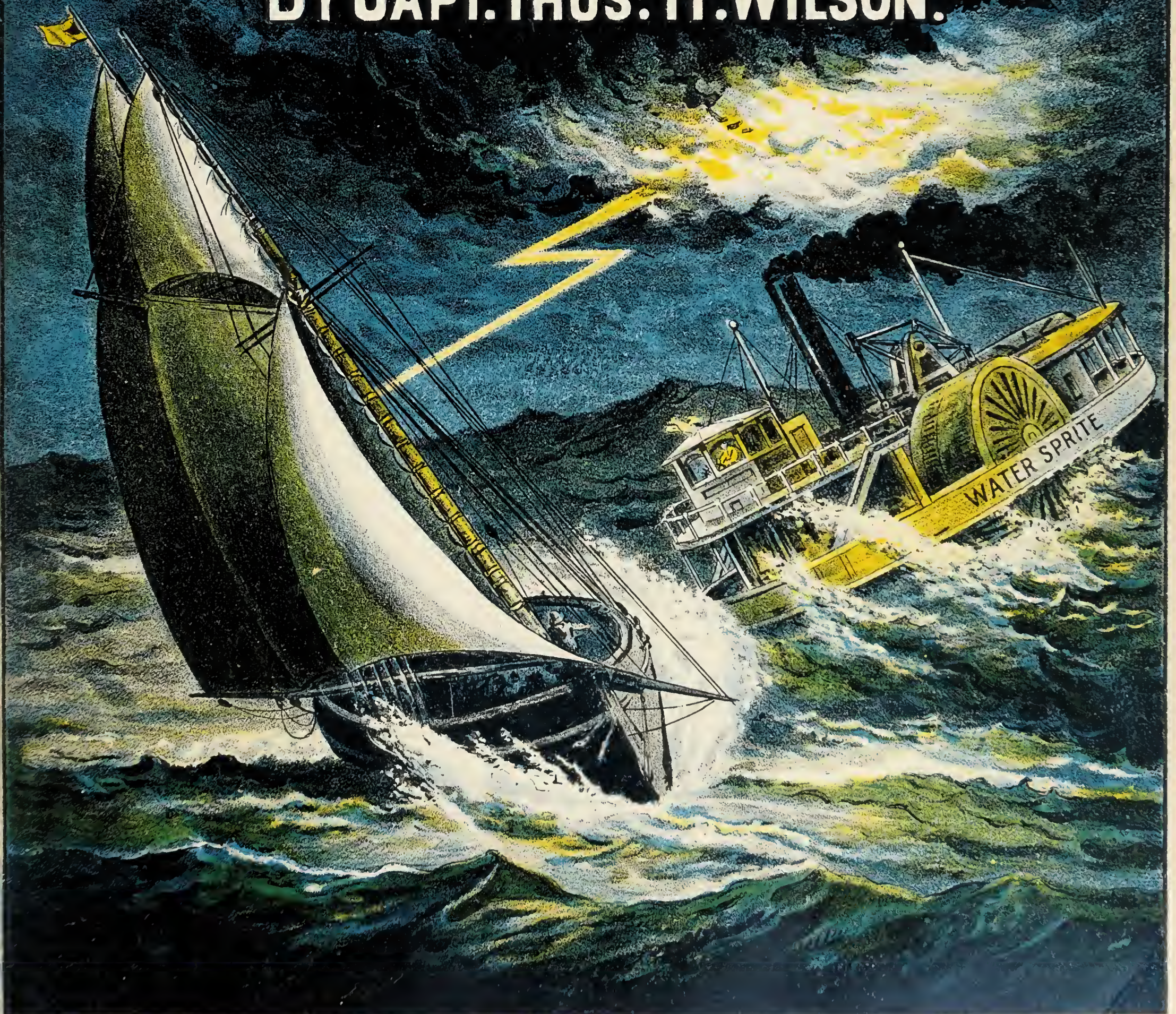
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No. 5.

NEW YORK, March 9, 1898.

Price 5 Cents.

THE BOY PILOT OF LAKE MICHIGAN, By CAPT. THOS. H. WILSON.



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THE BOY PILOT OF LAKE MICHIGAN.

By CAPTAIN THOS. H. WILSON.

CHAPTER I.

LEON LEROY.

"DRUNKEN Dick! Come on, boys!"

"Drunken Dick!"

"Drunken Dick!"

A disolute and degraded wretch was this Drunken Dick, and known to everybody in Milwaukee as a poor fellow, honest as the day was long; his own worst enemy from inability to resist the temptations of the cup.

To most boys a drunken man is considered excellent prey, and more than once had Dick been tormented by the thoughtless young lads of Milwaukee, who could see in him only an object of sport instead of pity.

It was just before Christmas, and the first snow of the season lay on the ground.

"Drunken Dick!"

"Drunken Dick!"

So the boys, composing a small crowd, on the way for a skate, shouted, on seeing the ill-clad and miserable man staggering along, so deeply under the influence of liquor as hardly to be able to retain his perpendicular.

In a minute more every lad of them was busily engaged in packing and flinging snowballs at Drunken Dick.

One of the well-directed missiles took off his hat, at which there was a wild hurrah, and howl of delight. Dick then turned and faced his tormentors at whom he looked reproachfully, but not angrily.

Another snowball now struck him in the forehead, but fortunately was loosely packed, and did him no damage.

"Boys," said Dick, in a thick tone, when he had wiped the snow off of his face, "boys, you had ought to be ashamed of yourself for badgering a man who's never done any of you any harm."

They jibed and jeered at him when he had finished speaking, but no angry light appeared in his face or eyes. Dick was an educated man, and was gifted with delicate and sensitive feelings; and at such moments was made more than ever conscious of how deeply he had sunk that such things were possible.

Paying no heed to his maudlin expostulations they continued to snowball him, until finally one of their number flung a snowball, in the center of which was concealed a flat, sharp-edged piece of ice.

It was flung, and took Dick squarely in the forehead, which the ice gashed.

"Shame—shame!"

So cried a ringing voice at this juncture, and a stout young lad now hastily placed himself beside the drunken man.

"Why don't you try this when Dick is sober? Shame on you! Hold on, there!"—fixing his gaze on a lad in the very act of firing another snowball—"I am here to protect him, and I'm going to do it, too."

"Do you know him?" asked one lad of another.

"Yes, it's George Starr."

"One of the professor's crowd?"

"Yes."

"Then let's give him a dose, too."

"No—no," interrupted one, more fair-minded. "Give him a show—act square with him. Wait until he's got his crowd. Six against one ain't fair-play by a jug full."

But some of them had never known what it was to do a fair-minded thing, and one up and flung his ready snowball. It took George Starr in the breast.

The latter uttered no word. But his eyes began to sparkle.

The fact of his remaining silent encouraged the lads to proceed, and they did so.

"I warn you to stop!"

Laughing Starr's warning to scorn, they still proceeded to fusillade with the snowballs, until finally Starr sprang forward hastily, and by a well directed blow sent one of their number headlong in the snow.

This was the signal for opening a fray, and four of the six pitched on Starr. The other two remained idle spectators, not wishing to act so cowardly and unfairly.

Starr was a brave and gallant lad, and never quailed at finding himself opposed to four youths, all as old and large as himself.

He stood up manfully, and did his best, although it would have been insanity on his part to have supposed himself a match for all four. But he knew that there was honor in defeat sometimes, and this would be one of those occasions.

They crowded him hard; in another minute must have downed him completely, when the complexion of affairs was changed by the sudden appearance on the scene of a youth who was a stranger to them all.

Tall for his age, which was fourteen, he was well built, had dark blue eyes, and a handsome face, that was lined with the marks of determination. His hair was brown and curled tightly to his head, so tightly that no parting was visible.

It took him only a second to see how matters stood, and that Starr was alone opposed to the four.

"Whoop!" he cried, and placed himself at Starr's side, and then—spat—spat!

"Come on, you cowardly beggars—come on!" he exclaimed. "Four against one, eh? That shows what you are! Come on! Bravo!" as Starr sent one of his assailants to earth. "Bravo! (spat!) There's another!"

In less than two minutes the fight was ended. The crowd of six were retreating, the punished four growling and quarreling with the two who had stood by without interfering.

"Gentlemen," and drunken Dick approached them—"gentlemen, you both have my heartfelt thanks. I'm only a poor, broken down devil, who knows nothing except how to fiddle and guzzle rum, and it ain't likely I'll ever be able to repay your kindness, but if it can be done, I'll do it!"

Starr bestowed on the man a look of pity, which it was harder for Dick to calmly bear than the taunts and snowballs of the Academy crowd.

"Say no more, Dick," said Starr. "Here is ten cents for you, and try to spend it for something besides rum."

Refusing the proffered coin, Dick reeled away, uttering his thanks as he went.

"And now," said Starr, turning to his companion, after both had watched Dick disappear from sight; "and now let me thank you. But for your timely assistance they would have got away with me in fine style."

"Say no more about it. Which way do you go?"

"Up the street. Will you walk along with me?"

"Yes. And as we go I should like to ask a few questions."

"Which I shall certainly answer to the best of my ability," courteously returned Starr. "You are a stranger here, I think."

"I am. I have come to attend the school of Professor Teachem."

"Why, I go there myself. We shall then be school-mates."

"Which I shall not be sorry for. Gracious, weren't you laying out those chaps. Well, I'm in want of a nice boarding place, and the questions I wished to ask were in regard to one."

"Are you left to select it yourself?" asked Starr, in some surprise.

"Yes," was the reply, and the voice took on a sad tone. "I am all alone in the world, and young as I am, have to act for myself."

For a minute Starr was silent, and then he blurted out:

"How would you like to live with my folks?"

"Could I? Would they let me?" in an eager tone. "I should like nothing better."

"We can see whether they will or not," returned Starr. "Father is far above the necessity of keeping a boarding-house, but I am an only child, and if I seem to wish it very bad, I shouldn't wonder if they let me have my way."

"Then you like me?" and the stranger gazed earnestly into the frank and open face of George Starr.

"Immensely!" returned the latter.

"And I like you," said the stranger. "We will be chums henceforth. What say you——"

"George Starr!" filling the blank. "I say yes——"

"Leon Leroy."

The two lads shook hands, and then together went to the home of George Starr.

That evening after supper, shared by Leon, when they were all gathered in the sitting-room, George broached the subject which was uppermost in his mind. It had been spoken of before to his mother, who had intimated the same to Mr. Starr, who was consequently not taken by surprise.

Mr. Starr was loath to take anybody into his house; but, as George had said, he was an only child, and there were but few occasions on which his wishes were not acceded to.

And this was not one of them.

"Before taking your answer, Mr. Starr, I must first tell you my history," said Leon. "It is only right you should know it."

"Of my parents I know nothing whatever. Of my mother I have a dim recollection. The first that I distinctly remember was being an inmate of a school for small children. Here I remained until recently, when I received a letter from a Chicago lawyer, ordering me to Professor Teachem's, in this place. Through this lawyer sums of money are regularly received for my maintenance and education, and I am satisfied that he knows who my parents are, although he keeps it a profound secret. I am, and have always been, left strictly to myself, and a lonesome life mine has been, with no playmate nor com-

panion in whom I could confide. And now, sir, you know the bare outlines of my history."

Good, kind-hearted Mrs. Starr was touched by the relation of this story, and gladly welcomed the lone and unknown youth into her household. And she never had reason to regret doing so.

CHAPTER II.

ON THE LAKE.

MONTHS passed away, and in their flight cemented the friendship between George Starr and Leon Leroy, whom Mr. and Mrs. Starr had come almost to love as their own son.

Together they attended the school of Professor Teachem, and in the occasional pitched fights between the professor's crowd and the "Academy" lads, they proved such a valiant team that it was not long before the Academyites declared a truce.

Mr. Starr's business was that of storage of merchandise, and particularly grain, which business—now of such immense proportions—was then in its infancy. In connection with his storage warehouses, Mr. Starr owned and ran a steamboat between Milwaukee and Manitowoc, touching along shore between these two points, and making three round trips in a week.

Both of the lads were fond of the water, and during the summer they almost lived on board of the Lark, Starr in the engine-room with the engineer, and Leon in the pilot-house, when they were under way.

A proud moment it was for George when the engineer put the starting bar in his hand and trusted him to work the engine to warm her up just before starting on a return trip from Manitowoc.

And it was not long before George could be trusted to work the Lark into landings and out again.

"I never in all my life seed anybody pick it up as quick as you have," the engineer one day said. "Why, in case of necessity, you could now be trusted to run the Lark a round trip."

The old and grizzled pilot was equally as complimentary concerning Leon. The pilot had spent many years on the lake, and knew its coast like a book. Not a rock nor tree of any prominence was to be found along shore with which he was not familiar.

He had taken a fancy to Leon, and imparted to him much information derived from his own observations, and which, up to this time, he had kept locked in his own breast.

At last he hesitated not an instant in permitting Leon to guide the vessel, while he laid back in the pilot-house and puffed away at a highly-colored meerschaum pipe.

"For a boy, you're the smartest pilot I ever saw," the old fellow remarked, as he stood by and watched Leon make his first landing.

"I've had a good teacher, which accounts for it," and Leon laughed lightly.

"Well, now," and the pilot's face was lighted by a gratified glow at this compliment—"well, now, the teacher may have had a little to do with it, but the teachin' wouldn't amount to nothin' if there wasn't the ability to comprehend it. It would be like trying to fill up a bottomless well."

That was a happily passed vacation.

And the manner in which it was spent was destined to have much influence on their future lives.

Mr. Starr had refused to receive more than a nominal sum for the board of Leon, so that the latter was able to save considerable out of his very ample allowance, which arrived at stated intervals, together with a short note, hoping that Master Leon was well, and extending the compliments of the season.

Never was there a holiday, when it was possible, that the two friends did not pass it on the lake.

The following year, just before the summer vacation, Mr. Starr made his son a present of two hundred dollars. This was added to the sum of which Leon was master, and on the last day of school, they were two as happy lads as the world ever saw.

Accompanied by Mr. Starr, they went next day to Chicago, where they had had an agent for some time on the lookout for a small steam vessel.

This he had found only a few days before, and had bought on approbation—that is, agreeing to buy the vessel if the parties he represented were suited with her.

On seeing her the lads at once fell in love with her.

She was a dainty little craft, and was named Water-Sprite.

They went on board of her, and George went into ecstasies over the brightly polished engine, while Leon found food for admiration in the pretty wheel-house, with its big wheel, made of dark and light colored woods combined.

The boat had been used as a pleasure craft by a wealthy gentleman, who had now no further use for her; and everything was in apple-pie order aboard the Sprite, as they soon learned to call her.

Steam was raised and a trial trip made. The Sprite had been built with an eye to speed, and as her prospective owners sailed her a few miles up the lake, they went nearly wild with delight.

"How is it, Leon?" George called up from the engine room. "Is she making time?"

"Is she? You're just shouting she is! Got on all the steam she will carry?"

"No, not by twenty-five pounds."

"Bully! George, the Sprite is a treasure—is a darling!"

And so she was.

They worked her up a little more—and a little more, until they were all satisfied that she was covering more miles than even the Lark could, which was saying a good deal, as the Lark was at that time one of the smartest crafts on the lake.

Now, if only the price was not too great!

Haunted by this fear, they turned the Sprite's head toward Chicago—not the Chicago of to-day, but a far different place—a place of uneven, breakneck sidewalks, houses raised above the street on piles, with vacant spaces beneath them.

The owner really wanted more money than the lads wished to pay, or in fact, would pay.

When the agent knew their limit, he sent word to the owner, who concluded to take the proffered sum rather than keep the Water-Sprite longer on his hands.

It took only a short time to constitute Leon and George the legal owners of the vessel, and two days later they headed the Sprite for Milwaukee. The run was made in remarkably quick time, elating her new owners amazingly.

At first, it was the intention of Leon and George to keep the Sprite exclusively for their own use, but this they found to be rather more expensive than they had supposed would be the case, and with Mr. Starr's consent, the following advertisement appeared in one of the Milwaukee papers:

"TAKE NOTICE:—For select picnic, or tourist parties, the Water-Sprite can be chartered by the day or week, during the months of August and September. Apply to Captain Leon Leroy, on board."

The first party they were called on to take out, was composed of a number of gentlemen from New York, who had been West on business, and had some object in view in wishing to go up the lake; perhaps only to see it, for all that ever was known. It was, however, presumed to be only a pleasure party.

It was a glorious morning that had been selected for the start.

"On deck, there!" called Leon, when all the party was on board.

"Aye, aye, sir!" came the Dutch accepted reply of Dederick Donner, who had been engaged as the Sprite's deck hand.

"Haul in the plank!"

This Dederick proceeded to do.

"Throw off! Haul in the lines!"

Leon's hand was on the bell-pull.

Clang—clang!

George caused the wheels to turn over backward, throwing the Sprite's prow further away from the dock.

Clang!

Steam was cut off; the wheels ceased to move.

Clang!

Slowly steam was let into the cylinders; the wheels began to revolve in the proper direction, and the Sprite began to forge ahead.

Ting-a-ling—a-ling—aling!

It was the jingle bell, and meant "hook on."

The long arms, or eccentrics, fell into their places with a clash, following which George opened the valve a little wider.

Now followed the regular, monotonous, uninterrupted spat of the buckets of the wheels as they churned the water, and the Sprite was fairly under way.

At Kewaupee, some miles up the lake, they stopped to take on

board another member of the party, and then headed for Sturgeon Bay.

Here a week was pleasantly and profitably spent in fishing and hunting.

Then the leader of the party approached Leon to inquire how far he could safely pilot them up the lake.

"I can take you to the Straits of Mackinack," was the reply.

"Safely?"

"Yes, sir."

"I think, then, we'll go up as high as that, stopping along the way at the different points of interest."

"Very well."

Nothing of interest occurred until one afternoon, when, while in the middle of the lake, Leon's keen eyes, taught by the old pilot of the Lark, discovered signs in the distance of a coming squall.

Immediately he began issuing his orders to get everything snug and in the best possible shape to meet the swiftly approaching squall.

As he continued to watch the coming squall, his face first became grave, and then the color began to desert it.

"Is there any danger?"

So asked the leader of the pleasure party, keenly eying Leon, as he entered the pilot-house.

"I'll not conceal the truth from you. There is danger ahead of us—great and terrible danger—but with His help we'll pull through."

The gentleman gazed intently at Leon for fully a minute, and then he breathed a sigh of relief. His life, and the lives of his friends depended on this young lad. But that inspection, during which Leon stood there, his hands firmly clutching the spokes of the wheel, his figure erect, his nostrils distended, like those of a war-horse at the beat of the drum and clash of distant musketry, informed him that their lives could be in no better keeping under the circumstances, unless lack of experience might be the cause, for certainly Leon did not lack nerve and pluck.

On came the squall with the speed of a racehorse.

The sinking sun was long since hidden behind a dense black mass of clouds, which were mounting swiftly higher and higher in the heavens.

Far away they could see an immense foam-crested roller bounding along, marking the progress of the squall. Nearer and nearer, and then they heard the shrieking of the wind and the din and roar of the waves.

With a last swoop and a shriek, the squall was down on them, like a hawk pouncing on its prey.

Beneath the shock of the terrible stroke of that first gigantic roller, the little Sprite trembled from stem to stern as if in a death-throe. The upreared crest of the roller broke over her, and for a few seconds her fore deck was hidden from sight. It was a terrible moment, for it was then a question whether the Sprite would be able to rise beneath the weight of the water, or would be crowded forever beneath the lake by the succeeding waves.

Not one on board the little steamer but held his breath in suspense, his cheeks blanched and lips trembling.

Gallant little vessel! Nobly did she behave! She seemed gifted almost with reason, as she struggled against being overpowered by the angry rollers.

She shed her load of water, and arose like a duck to the surface.

All breathed more easily.

But the face of Leon remained grave. In the track of the squall a storm was following—a storm which they might not outlive.

CHAPTER III.

HARD-APORT!

OLD tars frequently sneer at fresh-water sailors, and listen in derisive manner to the tales of terrible storms on the great fresh-water seas of America.

And yet the storms on the lakes are frequently as severe as those of the broad oceans that divide the continents, with the difference that on the lakes the waves are shorter—more "choppy"—and everyone strikes with sledge-hammer force.

The author once heard of an old Jack-tar who had sneered at the lakes a great deal, who, chancing to be caught out in a vessel on a pretty rough day, was taken violently seasick, something that had never happened him at sea.

Thereafter he was never heard to utter a sneering expression.

Of the nature of these lake storms Leon was well aware, and as we have said, his face remained very grave. So well had the Sprite acted at the moment of being struck by the squall, that he was more than ever in love with her.

Still, unless she was a more seaworthy craft than he had reason to believe her to be, she could never outlive the coming storm, and no port could be made.

He did not consider it right to keep his passengers in ignorance of the true state of affairs, and told them frankly that while he would do his best, he feared for the worst.

"But she survived the squall!" cried one. "Surely, then, she should ride out the storm."

"She would have gone under had I not eased her at precisely the right moment," returned Leon. "Were it daylight, and I could see every approaching mountain of water, I might be able to carry her through for a couple of hours. But night is already closing in, and —"

Leon paused, glanced from one to another, and then solemnly said:

"Our lives are in the hands of Providence alone, and there we must place our trust."

They saw that his words, his gloomy view of the situation, were not the result of cowardice, but were rather what a brave mind saw in looking fearlessly at stern facts.

Leon was not mistaken in his supposition that a storm was following in the wake of the squall.

After the latter had passed, there came a lull of, perhaps, fifteen minutes, and then the storm closed in on them, even as the dense darkness of a cloudy night settled over the face of the lake.

The rain began to drive against the pilot-house windows.

The wind began to whistle through the stay-chains of the smoke-stack.

The chopping waves struck under the bows—thump—thump—sometimes so heavily as to stop all headway.

The Sprite began to pitch and toss frightfully, and ere long every person on board, (save Leon, George and Dederick, who were used to the lake,) was seasick.

What made matters worse, was the frequent and sudden shifting of the wind, which would send an unexpected roller under the Sprite's guard, and, lifting one side high out of water, would leave the wheel to spin around in air.

This strained the engine fearfully, and it would groan and squeak, until George would stand with distending eyes, every moment expecting to see something give way, and only breathing free again when Leon brought the vessel's head around to the wind's new quarter.

Wilder and wilder the tempest grew, and higher the waves ran.

One moment the Sprite was perched on top of an immense roller, and the next instant was plunging headlong down into the trough of the sea, until it seemed as if naught but a miracle could save her from diving bodily out of sight.

The eccentric movement of the vessel made it exceedingly hard for George to fire up, he being fireman as well as engineer, and oftentimes the stick of cord wood which he tried to fling into the furnace was pitched back on the floor by a sudden jerk.

This gave rise to a sudden and terrible danger in the early part of the storm. While the furnace doors were open, the Sprite suddenly tried to stand on her head, and a lot of blazing wood and a bushel or more of red-hot coals rushed out of the furnace, spread beyond the iron guard-plate on the floor, and reached the yellow pine flooring beyond.

In an instant there was a blaze.

Rapidly it began to spread, while George, appalled by the suddenness of this great peril, was rooted to the spot with horror.

But only for one moment.

His first impulse was to call up through the tube and inform Leon. But then he reflected that Leon had all he wanted to attend to, and instead, called to Dederick for his assistance.

"Himmel!" gasped the Dutch lad, on seeing the fire. "Das was nix goot vater? By gracious, I dinks dot if ve open the front doors ve got plenty."

"Quick, Dederick! We have no time to lose," dashing shut the furnace doors.

Dederick was a quick-witted youth as well as a clear-headed one. Going to the doors which divided the enclosed portion from the open

foredeck, he opened one of them about six inches. The next wave that broke over the deck rushed against the doors, and began pouring through the opening.

Closing the door as soon as possible, he snatched a broom and began to sweep the backward rushing tide into the fire room, flush with the main-deck, and not, as is usually the case, in the hold.

In no other way could they have obtained water enough to quench the fire; but in this way they got plenty, and had some to spare, which at each pitch of the vessel, rushed up and down the deck.

"Thank Heaven!" gasped George, when all danger of fire was passed. "That was a narrow escape. Dederick, bring the fire-pails here and fill them with water in case we have another accident of the same kind."

At once, Dederick brought the buckets, and with a scoop caught the water rushing along the deck and put in as much as would remain without slopping over.

Dederick had just finished doing this, when Leon called down through the tube for him to come up and give his assistance at the wheel.

The Sprite usually worked very easily, but the reverse was the case at the present time, else Leon would not have called Dederick.

What a night!

It was impossible to see six inches in front of one's nose, and Leon was now steering by compass alone. Just before it became too dark to see, Leon had taken out and located his position on a chart.

When Dederick had entered the pilot-house and taken hold of the wheel, Leon consulted the compass, and his face grew very white as he stared at it with an intentness and earnestness that denoted the needle's informing him of something out of common.

"Keep her steady!" said Leon, in a husky voice. "Speak the instant you find the wind chopping. I must look at the chart again."

Spreading out the chart, he struck a match, whose flame lasted sufficiently long for his purpose. He saw all—ay, more than he wanted to see.

He saw that they were slowly but surely drawing near a group of rocky islands, situated near the center of the lake, known thereabouts as Fox Isles.

Did the wind hold in its present quarter they must inevitably be wrecked, for an attempt to wear about, or do aught but keep the Sprite's bows to the tempest, meant absolute death.

"Heaven be merciful to us!" murmured Leon, as he folded up the chart and took his post beside Dederick at the wheel.

For the first time he now learned of the peril from fire which they had just escaped, and the thrill of horror the tale produced was still tingling his nerves, when, high above the roar of the tempest, came a wild shriek—a shriek uttered by a human voice.

Catching their breath, they listened.

Again it came.

Bang! Down went the window of the pilot-house, and Leon faced the wild storm.

Again it came, borne on the shrieking blast.

This time he understood it.

"Boat ahoy!"

"Ay—ay!" making a trumpet of his hands.

"Ease off, or you'll sink us!"

Leon groaned. It was an impossibility. Heaven help them all!

Thirty or forty seconds of dreadful waiting, of awful suspense, and then across their bows—seen by aid of the steamboat's lights—Leon saw a rakish schooner flit by. He gasped and held his breath.

Gurr-r-r-r-r-r!

There came a shock and a long continued grind as the bows of the Sprite scraped more than half her length of the schooner, which then darted out of sight, plunging into the gloom so suddenly that it almost appeared as if she had dissolved into nothing.

"Good Heavens! What's that?" came up through the tube.

"We have narrowly escaped a collision. See if she is making water—that grind may have sprung her stern."

"She is making water, I think," came back the distant reply a moment later.

"Go down, Dederick."

"But, captain, can you handle the wheel alone?"

"Go down. I must do it. Go at once."

Hardly had Dederick left the pilot-house when Leon suddenly bent

forward, and gazed earnestly ahead to a distant spot in the gloom, where the universal blackness was modified by a red glow like that which a beacon fire might produce.

Just as he was convinced that his eyes had not deceived him, his ears were saluted by that most dreadful of sounds, to one who comprehends what is implied—of high running waves dashing against unyielding rock, and forming breakers.

Nearer—nearer, the glow of a fire becoming more and more marked, and the sounds of the breakers ringing louder and louder in his ears.

It was, indeed, an appalling situation.

Leon located the dreadful spot, flung open the cover of the compass box, glanced at the needles, swept his eyes around the dense circle of gloom ahead, and then—

With a mad and despairing energy, he gripped the spokes of the wheel and jammed it down hard-aport—hard-aport for his own life—hard-aport for the lives entrusted to his care—hard-aport to cheat the black and blood-hungry rocks ahead—hard-aport, and the gale caught her quarter and careened her over—over, until one guard was entirely beneath water.

Leon eased her up, but she would not rise. Instead, while one guard continued to rise, the other plunged deeper and deeper into the boiling water.

Further and further she keeled over, until at last a hollow cry—denoting the loss of all hope—fell from Leon's bloodless lips.

When he gave up, the case was indeed desperate. He thought they too, must now find the same watery grave which he felt sure had long since engulfed the schooner.

CHAPTER IV.

THE "SPRITE" BEHAVES WELL.

THERE were a few dreadful seconds of suspense, during which it was impossible to foretell what would be the result of bringing around the Sprite so as to prevent her destruction on the rock-ribbed reef near the island.

Up to this time her gallant pilot had kept her on the surface of the lake by the exercise of a strong hand, backed by steady nerves, so as to bring the Sprite's head around at each new change in the gale.

By now changing her course to save her from the rocks, the gale caught her on the side, and careened her far over, until one guard was buried far under water.

Over—over she kept going—and Leon caught his breath, and waited the result with a sinking heart.

He eased her up a trifle, as much as he dared, but it was too little to accomplish any good.

To ease her sufficiently to escape the present danger, was to run into another equally as great.

Over—over—until Leon groaned:

"She is capsizing—nothing can save her! She will turn upside down, and go straight to the bottom of the lake."

Oh, the agonies of such a moment of doubt and uncertainty.

It was a most desperate strait.

Only the hand of a merciful Providence could save them.

And that hand, or fate, or luck—call it what you will—befriended them in this moment of dire necessity.

There came a sudden lull or cessation of the wild blast, such as are observable in nearly every gale, and which science cannot account for.

It lasted just one minute. Brief as the time was, it allowed the Sprite a chance of righting herself, and the seaworthy little craft at once availed herself of it. Slowly the depressed guard began to rise, and she was nearly on an even keel, when, with a wild shriek, the gale pounded down again.

With pale but resolute face, Leon stood clutching the spokes of the wheel. Every nerve was vibrating, though every muscle was steady.

The blast struck the Sprite.

A space of time not exceeding a couple of seconds, and then a low but fervent exclamation fell from Leon's lips:

"Thank Heaven!"

The gale's direction had changed a couple of points, and he was

able to bring the Sprite's bows even further around, thus leaving the rocks further under his lee.

Slowly the vessel forged ahead, now climbing slowly up some hill of water, now plunging with incredible swiftness into the valley, while her engines creaked and strained.

Everything held, however; the Sprite was well and strongly built.

And now, getting beyond the point of rock which had hidden from view the fire whose reflection had been seen, Leon saw the fire itself.

It was a bon-fire, made of fagots, and was burning in a bowl-shaped cavity of the rocky elevation near the shore.

Just beneath the fire, partially in its glare, and partially in the edges of the deep shadows, Leon saw three men and a woman. All seemed anxious, for all were peering out over the yeasty surface of the lake, as if expecting yet dreading to see something.

"Can they be watching for the schooner?" reflected Leon. "If they have friends aboard of her, I pity them; she must be foundered before now."

Now placing his mouth to the speaking tube, he asked if Dederick had yet made an examination of the hold.

"Yes," came back the reply, followed by the cheering words: "And we're all right! Our bows are not sprung a particle."

This was verified by Dederick himself when he appeared in the pilot-house a few minutes later. Striking the schooner had not done the Sprite any harm. As to the schooner that could only be known by those on board of her, and they would never live to tell the tale—at least, so Leon thought.

All that livelong night Leon and Dederick remained at the wheel. It took them fully two hours before they felt assured that the Sprite no longer was in danger of running on these rocky islands. From that time until daylight was a succession of fleeting alarms and prompt actions. A dozen times or more the touch of the wheel at the right moment saved the vessel, and every few minutes they were obliged to change the Sprite's course, as the gale continued to chop around, until it at last came from nearly a directly opposite quarter to that from which it had at first come howling over the lake.

With the dawning of day the gale began to abate, and before noon the surface of the lake was quite calm, and the sun shone out brightly.

By this time the passengers on the Sprite had recovered from their seasickness and the alarms occasioned by the perils through which they had passed.

They now paid a visit in a body to Leon, and expressed their thanks and gratitude for saving their lives by sticking so closely to his post.

"It was my duty," replied Leon. "Say no more then, gentlemen, but rather inform me what you now wish to do."

This question they had already been discussing among themselves, and one quickly rejoined:

"If we are liable to be caught in any more storms like those of last night, I move that we get ashore at once."

"Are we liable to meet with another storm?" asked another.

"You certainly are," was the reply. "Storms are uncommon at this season of the year; but having had one is proof that another is possible. And a storm on Lake Michigan is no joke."

"I grant you that. And do you think we'll meet another storm in a week or ten days?"

"I do not."

"Then I move that we complete our contemplated trip," to his companions.

One and all had the most profound confidence in this boy who had held the lives of them all in the hollow of his hand.

This was decided on by the passengers, and they had just left the pilot-house, when Leon sighted land ahead. Of this he was not sorry, as, when he made it, he could get his bearings, instead of running at random as he was now doing.

"Do you turn in, Dederick, and get some sleep," said Leon, "so as to be prepared to take my place in a couple of hours."

Dederick promptly obeyed. Entering a little state-room connecting with the pilot-house, his snore soon after floated to Leon's ears.

Meanwhile they slowly drew near the land sighted by Leon, who now saw that it was not a projecting point of the mainland, but an island.

When still nearer he became convinced that they were approaching

the island on which they had so nearly been destroyed the night before.

Nor was he mistaken.

Yes; there was the same line of breakers ahead, marked by a slender line of foam, but no longer booming sullenly as when he had first become aware of their nearness the night before.

Rounding the point of rock just as the sun was sinking, he saw before him the beach on which he had seen the woman and the men, and located the spot where the fire had blazed up.

Just here was a nice little haven, and Leon formed the intention of remaining all night, which would thus give him a chance to obtain the rest he so sadly needed. George was a little better off, having been able to catch a few cat-naps in the engine-room.

Blowing a prolonged blast on the steam-whistle, Leon headed the Sprite into the natural haven.

To his surprise no one came to the beach in response to the signal, and yet if anybody were on the island the scream of the whistle must have been heard.

As they drew near the shore, Leon saw a rude sort of dock, evidently the work of human hands, and beside this he eventually placed the Sprite, with the skill of a practiced pilot.

Still, none had put in an appearance, and Dederick was obliged to jump ashore and himself fasten the lines.

This rather puzzled Leon, and he thought it possible he might be mistaken until after he had paid a visit to the spot where he judged the beacon fire must have been. When he found the heap of ashes and charred fragments of wood remaining from this fire, he knew that he could not be mistaken—that he was on one of the Fox Isles.

It was growing dark by the time he reached the Sprite. Supper was ready, having eaten which, and had a smoke, he went outside for a last look around before turning in to get some sleep.

During the time he had been inside a great change had taken place. Darkness was settling on the face of the lake when he saw it last. Now it was bathed in the pale, mellow light of the nearly full moon.

His roving gaze was suddenly arrested by alighting on what seemed a human figure at some distance, which, seen in the flood of ghostly light, had something weird in its appearance.

He was trying to convince himself that it was something inanimate, so immovable was it, when its moving showed him that his first conjecture was the correct one.

Toward him it came in as straight a line as the uneven nature of the ground would admit.

Gradually the skin on Leon's forehead contracted; then a little tremor ran through his frame; then his flesh began to actually creep.

The nearer the figure came to him the more weird became its appearance. There was something unreal about it; it seemed more like a form of mist than one of flesh and blood; the pale light of the moon heightened the effect. Presently Leon clutched the rail, while a gasping sound came from his throat, for he was willing to swear he could see through the figure, could see the rocks behind it.

"Fool! Why did you come here? You are in danger! Fly, ere it be too late!" now came in hollow tones, as if from a tomb.

CHAPTER V.

THE "HAWK."

"THUNDER! That was a rub!"

"Ay—ay, that it was!"

"Down below with you, Jack, and see if anything has started—if we have sprung a leak anywhere. Careful, now, when you open the cabin doors!"

"Ay—ay!"

"Hold up! Not yet; there's a big one coming right up under our stern. Jerusalem! it will wash our decks! Every man hold on for life!"

Ke-bung!

First striking with a thud under the schooner's stern, the roller curled over the rear rail, broke, and the mass of water went rushing up the deck, and then poured in miniature cascades from her scuppers.

"Now's your time, Jack, before another of 'em comes along!"

"Ay—ay!" with which response on his lips the mate of the Hawk

opened the cabin doors and darted into the cabin, closing the doors behind him to prevent the ingress of water.

Fifteen minutes later he reappeared on deck.

"Is she sprung anywhere?" was the anxious query with which he was greeted.

"Not a spring! Cap, she's a darling, and is tight as a washtub and sound as a dollar."

"Good enough!" said the captain, in a tone of relief. "Give a hand here at the wheel, Jack."

"Ay—ay!"

It was the schooner which had come into contact with the Sprite.

Contrary to Leon's belief, the schooner weathered the storm.

Compelled to scud before the gale, as this shifted its quarter, the Hawk's course was changed, until in the last stages of the storm the vessel was being hurried toward Fox Isles, instead of away from them, as in the early part of the night.

By daylight Fox Isles were in sight, and, though the wind still blew stiffly, the Hawk was again manageable.

"Will you venture it, cap?" asked Jack Bolen, the mate, as he advanced to the captain's side.

"Yes," was the reply. "I don't like to run in during daylight, but after such a storm there will be a slight chance of being seen, as all the lake vessels will be far out of their courses."

"But won't it be too risky? We may get a hole in our bottom."

"Not while I have hold of the wheel," answered Captain Roswell, with a smile.

There was something singular about that man. Tall, broad-shouldered, handsome-faced—an Apollo in form, a Hercules in strength, with a high and noble forehead, and an expressive and intelligent eye, he seemed out of place at the helm of a craft like this.

His complexion was only slightly bronzed, and his brown hair laid in loose curls over his forehead.

Even when at rest, his face expressed a depth of character such as few men possess.

When he spoke, his accent was such as plainly showed that he was a man whom it would be dangerous to thwart or disobey.

And even the Hawk seemed to know—insensible wood and iron, and canvas, and rope though she was—when his strong hand undertook her guidance.

She seemed to sail steadily the instant his hands grasped the spokes of the wheel.

True to his prediction, he worked the Hawk in past the line of dangerous breakers, and rounded to at the dock so skillfully, that the shock of contact was scarcely greater than that when the lips of an ardent lover salutes the glowing cheek of the girl he loves.

On the rude dock, the three men seen by Leon in the glare of the beacon-fire, were awaiting the schooner's approach, and taking her lines when they were thrown out, the Hawk was quickly made fast.

Captain Roswell's first inquiry was whether any vessel had been wrecked on the isles during the night. From the course the unknown steamboat had been on, he thought she must surely have been wrecked here.

"No," was the reply. "But a steamboat had a close shave for it, and if the wind hadn't hauled around a p'int or two just in the nick of time, she'd a-gone to pieces on the rocks yonder."

"She got away safely, though?"

"Yes."

"Humph! Well—Jack, I'll leave it to you to see to unloading. Have Scipio brought up to the cave!" having issued which orders, Captain Roswell strode away without waiting for a reply.

At some short distance from the shore, Captain Roswell's face brightened. Just before the entrance to a cave, half-natural, half-artificial, stood a beautiful young girl.

"Back again!" he said, in a tone that, though grave, also denoted pleasure, and the stern face relaxed into something like a smile.

"I'm glad to see you, uncle!"

"And how has my little May been, during my absence?"

"Well, uncle—very well, only a little lonesome sometimes," and then she put up her lips, on which he pressed a kiss in that silent manner of his.

Turning around now, she preceded him into the cave, so artfully made that it might defy the strictest scrutiny to discover it.

An overhanging rock had been taken advantage of in commencing the construction of this secret retreat. From the top of this rock,

trunks of trees, placed close together, had been sloped to a point at least twenty feet from the base of the rock.

The outside of these tree trunks had been covered with cement, and then a layer of several feet of earth, into which any quantity of bushes had been transplanted, giving it the appearance of a natural bank of earth.

And yet there were spacious chambers behind it. The cave was twenty feet deep, and nearly a hundred in length.

To it were two entrances. One led into a section divided by a thick wall from the main part of the cave, for the use of May Meredith and the old negro woman who waited on her.

The second entrance led into a couple of good-sized rooms, where the men slept, and beyond these was a large storehouse, filled more than half with many and various kinds of merchandise.

"I'm so glad you're safe," said May, as Captain Roswell dropped into a large, cushioned chair. "I was afraid you would try to run into the island last night, and I myself stood long on the beach, and saw that the fires were kept brightly burning."

"And did my little niece really do as much as that for the sake of her smuggler uncle?" with a sarcastic laugh. "Why, since my last visit, when you read us a lecture on the sin of smuggling, I imagined that you would rather have quenched the fire."

"Oh, uncle——"

"Hush!" and his eyes flashed angrily, being vexed that he had allowed himself to speak in this manner.

In a minute he spoke again, in an altered tone.

"During the storm last night, Scip was tossed against his berth and badly bruised if not seriously hurt. I am going to leave him here this trip, and will be pleased with you if you will attend to him a little."

"I shall do as you wish, uncle," was the low-toned reply, after which a lengthy silence followed.

During this, Captain Roswell sat with bent head, his eyes fixed almost moodily on the floor, while May Meredith's eyes would rest for long spells together on him, then would flit away, then return again, all the while lighted by an expression of mingled fear and love.

Very few more words passed between them. Just before parting, he presented her with silk for a dress, for which she thanked him.

Holding her two hands in his, he gazed intently for a full minute, and then muttered:

"If you had only been the son!"

"What do you mean?" she quickly asked.

"Why, this——good-by," and bending to kiss her, he then strode away.

All the goods to be unloaded were already stored; and the lines being cast off, the Hawk stood out into the lake, and in an hour or a little more, had disappeared from sight.

Scip's injuries had been looked after, and May Meredith had trimmed her lamp and was just commencing to read, when, after first knocking, a man entered.

"What's wrong, Ben?" demanded May.

"The steamboat we saw last night has entered the bay, and by this time is tied fast to the dock."

"What can we do?"

"First of all, none of us must go outside, excepting myself."

"Well," said May, "and you?"

"I will play the ghost game again," was the reply.

"Is it wise to do so?" said May, thoughtfully. "On board of a steamboat there must necessarily be intelligent men, who will not be frightened as easily as fishermen."

"We must try it, for the Gull should be here to-night. Desperate cases require desperate remedies."

With which he took his departure.

CHAPTER VI.

A VAIN SEARCH.

Few people are possessed of as little superstition as entered into the composition of Leon Leroy's character, and yet he could not help shivering and feeling disagreeable, at sight of this strange figure, through which he thought he could see.

Let fear once become aroused, and it is wonderful with what horrors the imagination can invest the simplest thing. So it was in the present instance with Leon. The weird appearance of that approaching figure, bathed in the ghastly, pallid rays of the moon, had impressed him deeply; imagination had done the rest.

At the sound of those hollow-toned words he was staggered and made actually weak, for at the moment he felt as if they were really uttered by some other than a mortal like himself.

And yet, as the reader has ample reason for supposing, it was none other than Ben, playing ghost.

Having uttered these words, Ben began retreating slowly, keeping his eyes fixed on Leon, fearing that he might take it into his head to draw a weapon.

Indeed, it was only a brief space of time ere Leon felt for his fire-arms. Only a few seconds was he oppressed by that nameless terror. Then he recovered his courage, if not all of his wits, and would have liked to send a bullet at the figure. If it were immaterial, it would not be harmed; if it were flesh and blood, the trickster would be properly punished.

But he did not have his weapons at hand.

Making a dash inside, he reached down George's revolvers from the hook on which they hung in the engine-room, and then sprang outside again, ready for a shot.

But the figure had vanished completely, short as was the interval of time it had taken Leon to procure the weapons.

When satisfied that the figure had really disappeared, he returned inside, his face grave, wondering what it was best to do.

He finally concluded to tell all on board exactly what he had witnessed.

His passengers exchanged glances of intelligence as they listened to the narration of Leon.

They did not believe it to be anything unearthly, nor did Leon, now that he was in his sober senses.

"We must remain until morning, and then search the island," said one of the passengers.

"Right," rejoined Leon. "And for fear of harm to the Sprite, a guard had better be maintained all night. I am so completely fagged out that I shall be obliged to call on you to act as sentries after midnight. Up to that time Dederick can watch."

Matters having been thus arranged, Leon laid down, and so fatigued was he that his head scarcely touched the pillow before he fell asleep.

About midnight Dederick awakened him and drew him out on deck, and there called his attention to what resembled the glow of another beacon fire.

He would have at once started off toward it but for the reflection that every foot of the island was unknown to him, and he could not foresee the dangers into which he might run.

It was in reality the glow of a beacon to warn the Gull not to approach the island.

Returning to bed, Leon slept soundly until just before daylight, when, by his orders, he was called.

Breakfast was soon ready, and just before sunrise the meal was eaten, and then all but Dederick and Starr started on an exploring tour.

They found no employment for the weapons they carried. So far as they could discover, the island was uninhabited.

In the direction whence they had seen the glow of fire at midnight they found a spot where a fire had at some time been burning on the smooth surface of a rock. But neither embers nor ashes were there now, and it was impossible to say whether they had been swept away by human hands or the elements.

So they returned to the Sprite no wiser than when they had set out. The search had been as vain as any search that ever was made.

"There must have been someone on the island last night, but I'll swear no living creature is on it now," said one of the passengers.

"I'll take an affidavit to the same effect," said another. "We've been over every foot of it, and there's neither house nor hut, nor any other place on it in which a rabbit could hide."

Certain as they were of this, the reader knows how greatly they were mistaken. Not a man of them, in fact, but had been most thoroughly scrutinized.

It was voted by those on the Sprite that they might as well be off at

once, and, the lines being cast loose, Leon piloted the gallant little craft out of the bay into the lake's broad expanse.

They had been some time under way when Leon received a visit, and was surprised on learning the particulars of the true characters of his passengers.

They felt that they could rely on his discretion, they said, and it might be better for him to know the truth.

They were—at least two of them—employees of the revenue department of the government. They were not common thief-takers or smuggler-hunters, but were out West on pleasure, and were now taking this trip up the lake to gain some idea in regard to the extent of the smuggling, which, it was said, was extensively carried on.

"You can depend on my integrity," was the simple reply of Leon.

"Of course, as you now understand, we are combining business and pleasure. We wish to pass a few days around and in the strait, visiting the best fishing grounds, while at the same time keeping a weather-eye open for the benefit of smugglers."

"Very well."

In accordance with this briefly outlined programme, Leon piloted the Sprite to several different fishing stations, and it was plain, (as they say, "to a person with half an eye"), that the revenue officers were more bent on sport than business, probably earning their salaries in the most pleasant way.

Two days the Sprite lay fastened to the dock of a rude hamlet, so small as not to be dignified by a name, inhabited by a few fishermen and watermen.

Just as the lines were being cast off, preparatory to departure, four roughly dressed men came in sight.

"I say, cap!" cried one.

"Well?" and Leon leaned out of the pilot-house window.

"Which way are you bound?"

"Up the strait."

"Well, if it wouldn't be askin' too much of you, would you give me and my comrades a lift?"

"I don't know——"

Leon hardly knew what to say. He hardly liked the appearance of the men, and yet he was too kind-hearted to feel like refusing to perform a kindness that was in his power.

"I don't know——" and he hesitated.

"We'll pay our way if you say so, cap," said the first speaker.

"I wouldn't ask you, only I've just heard that my wife's like to die, and it takes so thunderin' long to go by way of the road," and the fellow's voice trembled as if with half suppressed emotion.

Put in this guise, the appeal touched Leon's heart.

"Never mind about fare—jump aboard," he kindly told them, and when one of them afterward came into the pilot-house and had talked with him awhile, Leon upbraided himself for having suspected them.

Naught that was not right occurred until after darkness had fallen that night.

Dederick suddenly appeared in the pilot-house about eleven o'clock.

"I don't vas like de actions of dem four carls," he said, with a shake of his head. "Dey vas yust a talkin' togedder by der gang-way in vhispers. I bet me dot—"

"What do you bet?"

"Dot dey goomed aboard von de little Sprite for nix goot."

Leon was thoughtfully silent for a moment, and then he said:

"Go down, Dederick, and keep a sharp watch on them."

While Dederick was in the pilot-house, a scene such as he feared was being enacted on the main deck.

The passengers had "turned in" an hour before, and were all asleep.

The quartette had entered the engine-room, and without giving Starr time to become suspicious they seized hold of him, and one held a revolver to his head, while the others bound him hand and foot.

White-faced and wild-eyed, wondering what the villains were going to do next, the young engineer was penned in one corner of the engine-room.

A minute later Leon's voice was heard through the speaking tube.

"George—George! Is everything all right on the main deck?"

The villains for one moment looked blankly at each other. Then

one of them made a motion toward Starr, and he was at once dragged to the tube.

"Answer 'yes,'" hissed one of the desperadoes, placing the cold muzzle of a "barker" to his temple. "Answer as I bid you, or I'll scatter your brains over the floor."

George remained silent.

"George, are you there? Why don't you answer? Is everything all right?"

"Answer!" snarled the villain, who seemed to be in command of the others.

"I won't!" said George. "If I say aught, it will be to warn him."

"The knife, quick! it is not so noisy!" George heard, with blanching cheek and sinking heart.

CHAPTER VII.

DIAMOND CUT DIAMOND.

"THE knife—quick! Why are you so infernally slow about it?"

George Starr shuddered; it was horrible to witness the cool manner in which they prepared to murder him.

But the young fellow's wits did not desert him.

If he was to lose his life anyhow, it should not be until he had placed Leon on his guard.

His lips parted. He was in the act of shouting to Leon through the tube, when a savage oath betokened his discovery.

Quick as a flash a pair of strong hands grasped and choked him into silence.

Whether or not they really intended to murder him, the knife, at any rate, was passed to him who had asked for it.

Before it could have been used Dederick Donner appeared on the scene.

"Dunder und blitzen—vat vas dis? Haf dey got you, Shorge?"

"Yes!" George was enabled to gasp, the grasp on his throat being relaxed, in the surprise consequent on Dederick's sudden appearance.

"Vell, I bade me dot I makes dem sick!" with which Dederick lunged out with his clenched right fist, took one of the fellows beneath the ear, lifted him clear off his feet, and then by the use of his foot, succeeded in stretching him on the floor.

"Curse the Dutchman!"

"Go for him!"

"Shoot him!"

"Knife him!"

So the villains ordered each other, but none ventured to approach Dederick, who was dancing from one side to the other, his fists flashing this way and that in regular prize ring style.

The heavy fall of the fellow felled by Dederick had awakened the passengers of the Sprite, and they could now be heard turning hastily out.

Dederick's appearance was an unlucky *contretemps*, and being unprepared for it, the rascals knew not how to act.

Leon had waited impatiently for some reply from George, and his ear being at the tube, he had heard the noise of the fall, and knew that something was wrong.

"George, will you answer?" he called down through the tube.

"I vill!" shouted Dederick. "Dem four vellers vas houneyvachels; I haf knocked de sauerkraut out of von, und I vill do de same py der resd if dey don'd vas ged oud putty kvick."

The reply startled Leon, and on the impulse of the moment, he was about to fly to the lower deck; but recollecting himself, he knew that it was hardly safe to leave the pilot-house and let the Sprite take care of herself.

And so, in an agony of apprehension, he kept his ear to the tube.

With a stern face, he released his revolvers, and placed them so as to be easily got at. If the desperadoes should make themselves masters of the main deck, they should at least receive a warm reception when they reached him.

The villains looked blankly at each other. What was to be done?

Before any could devise a plan, it was too late to be of any use.

They might have made themselves masters of the vessel after a desperate fight and the shedding of much blood; but this did not seem part of their plan, for as the passengers appeared before one engine-room door they bolted out of the other.

The last one was assisted by the boot of Dederick.

"Himmel!" exclaimed the Dutch deck hand, limping after delivering the kick. "I must have struck a bone. If I dit, I dinks me dot he don'd vas sit down gomfordably in de next week."

The villains retreated to the fore-deck, and the passengers released Starr.

This attack was a strange affair, and none of them knew what to make of it.

Two of the gentlemen ascended to the pilot-house to keep Leon company, and the others remained to help to guard the engine room.

By means of the speaking tube Leon soon received from Starr a minute description of all that had occurred.

Leon was puzzled. He saw clearly that had they wished to murder George, they could easily have done so, and could as easily have shot Dederick in the time that intervened before the arrival of the passengers on the scene.

"What shall you do?" he was finally asked.

"The best way, I believe, will be not to take any notice of them, but to head the Sprite for some port where they can be given into custody."

The four villains never ventured to leave the fore deck. Had they done so they would have received a very warm reception. They remained so very quiet that at last Leon became quite uneasy, although not as much so as the others.

Still he persisted in his determination not to take any notice of them.

Hours passed; it was very near daybreak, when suddenly there came a heavy plunge, the rattling of a chain, and then a sudden shock which nearly threw flat to the floor all those in the pilot-house.

"They have let the anchor go, and it has reached bottom and has taken hold!" Leon explained to his pallid-faced companions.

Then turning to the tube, he was just in time to hear Starr's anxious query as to what had happened.

"It's only the anchor," was the reply.

Now a grim laugh floated up from the fore-deck. After waiting a moment to see if they had judged correctly as to the length of the cable, the rascals were now exhibiting their pleasure at the success of their scheme.

"Put on more steam," Leon called down through the tube. "We may be able to break the cable."

George put on every ounce of steam, and though it was sufficient to make every fiber of the Sprite quiver, the cable did not part.

As for the anchor, it held for some minutes, and then apparently was torn from its hold on the bottom, for the Sprite suddenly darted forward; but the anchor took a new and firmer hold, and brought up the Sprite "all standing."

"Cut off the steam," cried Leon, in a tone of alarm. "We dare not repeat that experiment again. We might tear the whole bows out of the vessel."

George promptly obeyed, and the Sprite lay at anchor.

Soon daylight broke, and land was visible about ten miles away.

What was to be done?

"Pilot-house, ahoy!"

"Well, what do you want?" Leon coldly asked, directing his gaze toward the fore-castle, whence the hail proceeded.

"We want to know what you intend doing?" said the other.

"Take and deliver you up to the law, as you deserve," was the stern reply.

"Oh, you do—do you? Now, see here, let's settle this matter peaceably. Why we came on board is none of your business, save that we intended harm to not a hair of anyone's head. Permit us to take one of the small boats and go, and we'll do you no harm now."

"What harm can you do us, anyhow?"

"A great deal. To speak plainly and waste no time, we know that we are in a box, and that you could turn us over to the law. Well, we don't intend to be. We have barricaded the entrance to the fore-castle through the hold, and you can't reach us here. And now, unless you are reasonable and let us go, we intend to scuttle the Sprite, and take equal chances with yourselves of reaching the shore alive."

There was no mistaking that the speaker was in dead earnest.

It was a case of diamond cut diamond.

Which diamond was hardest?

Leon secretly sent Dederick into the hold, where he learned that the villains had spoken truly about the barricading.

If they could only delay, could only stave off a decision for a while, it would have suited Leon splendidly, as they were right in the track of the lake vessels, and within an hour or two would probably be able to hail and obtain assistance.

But the villains were equally as well aware of this fact, and demanded an immediate answer.

This being delayed, the leader ordered one of the others to go down and commence boring holes through the Sprite's bottom.

Dederick, a few minutes later, reported that water was rising in her hold.

Leon ground his teeth. It was gall and wormwood to him to think of permitting them to escape, let alone assisting them to do so by delivering the Sprite's small boat to them.

But there was no help for it. There could no longer be any doubt of their being able to carry their threats into execution, and to save his gallant little craft he consented to their terms.

Dederick was instructed to lower the small boat and convey it beneath the Sprite's bows.

If ever a man did anything reluctantly, it was done by Dederick in obeying this order.

When informed that the boat was ready, the villains filed up from the fore-castle and clambered into it, then shoved away from the steamer, watched by Leon and his passengers.

How Dederick had managed to do it none of them knew, but when the small boat was some little distance from the Sprite they saw the Dutchman's head above water at its stern, his body and feet being projected forward on a line with the keel.

"The foolish fellow!" cried Leon. "He wants to save the boat and denounce them when they land."

Then, suddenly catching their breath, they interestedly watched what followed. They could guess what the oarsmen had said—namely, that the small boat pulled heavy, as if she had a drag attached to her.

"Perhaps there is," had been the reply, and heads were thrust over the side and the boat's run scrutinized. Then her bows were looked at, and then her stern. Dederick was discovered, and his friends shuddered when they saw a revolver at the head of the rash but brave Dutchman.

CHAPTER VIII.

SCIP, THE NEGRO.

"ARE you hurt much, Scip?"

"Not berry much, missy," was the reply of the old negro, and the tenderness of May's inquiry brought a look of affection to his eyes. "All you' folks allers been kind to Scip."

"All of my folks!" May quickly repeated. "Scip—good Scip—won't you please tell me all about them? I know a little now—a very little—from what uncle has said in his unguarded moments. Won't you tell me all about my parents?"

"Can't do it, missy."

"Why not?"

"'E cap'n berry bad man to go ag'inst. Kill Scip if tell. 'Sides dat, Scip take oaf never to tell till cap'n give he permission."

May Meredith sighed.

"Does Dinah know?" she suddenly asked.

"She was dere 'long wi' me," said Scip. "But, Missy May, please doan go for to git poor ole Dinah inter trouble."

May found that nothing could be learned from the old negro in relation to the secret of her life, and desisting from the vain attempt, she returned to her own apartment in the cave.

She asked a question or two of her negro woman, Dinah.

"Doan' know nuffin' 'bout it."

This was the stolid reply of the tutored negress to each question, and May had so much affection for this aged negress, who had watched over her from infancy, that she could not put her in danger by wheedling from her what she so much wished to know.

That William Roswell was her uncle she had no doubt. But who were her parents? She felt in her heart that they were gentlefolk, at least, and a word dropped now and then had assured her that her uncle had not always been what he now was.

Driving the whole vexing subject from her mind, she had been pre-

paring to spend the evening in reading, when, as before related, Ben had entered with the information of a steamer's having entered the little bay.

After having played ghost, and finding that it did not result in the steamer's departure, Ben had gone to the other side of the island, and had lighted a fire to warn the Gull against approaching the island.

Brushing up the debris of the fire he then returned to the cave, and with all the rest of its inmates remained closely housed.

Once or twice when the searchers approached the cave there was a momentary alarm lest the retreat should be discovered.

When the disappointed searchers, returning in a body toward the Sprite, paused near the cave, a number of pairs of curious eyes scrutinized them closely.

Among these pairs of eyes was counted Scip's.

At first the negro's gaze had been only a curious one, but of a sudden a deep and profound interest was infused into his manner. So marked was the change that May observed it, and began watching him.

Scip's eyes appeared about starting from their sockets, and a deep agitation began to convulse his frame.

"Bress de Lord!" he gasped.

"What is the matter, Scip?" inquired May, laying a hand on his shoulder.

"Oh, Missy May, dis am a bery happy day. Won't de cap'n be glad!"

"What does all this mean?" said May, in a mystified tone.

"In good time missy know all," was the quiet reply, and she knew that nothing could be extracted from him.

When she saw the steamer leave the bay her eyes followed it with regret, for she felt that on its deck was carried that which would have cleared up the dark and impenetrable veil which covered her life.

That night the Gull ran into the bay and took on board a miscellaneous cargo, to be delivered to different agents along the lake shore.

A few nights later and again the signal fire was lighted, and the Hawk rounded to, and was moored fast at ten o'clock exactly.

Scip hobbled to the door of the cave and there awaited the coming of William Roswell.

"Well, Scip," said the latter, in a not unkind tone; "are you recovered yet?"

"Not quite, sah. Massa Roswell, I'se seen him."

"Seen who?"

"De boy!"

The smuggler captain started violently, and clutched Scip's shoulder with so firm a hand that the negro gritted his teeth to prevent crying out with pain.

"How do you know you saw him?" in a stern tone.

"Golly, he got de family look!"

"Where did you see this person? Here on the island?"

"Yes; he pilot ob a steamer called de Water-Sprite."

"What name does he go by?"

"Dey called him Leon."

"Ha! Send Jack Bolen here."

"Yes, sah." And while Scip hobbled away on this mission, Captain Roswell thoughtfully entered the cave.

Circumstances had made an eavesdropper of May. Advancing to meet her uncle, she was just within the door when this conversation occurred. Wittingly the high-minded girl would not have stopped to listen, but as it was thrust on her, she could not help hearing.

She had retreated, and when her uncle entered, advanced from the further end of the apartment to give him greeting.

Hardly had they seated themselves when Bolen entered.

"Jack, what do you know about a vessel called the Water Sprite?"

"Not much."

"Then you have neglected your duty, for you are aware that it is my order that no craft shall ply the waters of this lake without our having a complete record of her."

"I knows it, cap'n, but the Sprite, as they called her for short, only changed hands a little while ago. She ain't in business, and is only a pleasure craft. All that I know is that she is owned in Milwaukee by two young fellows, one of which is pilot and cap'n, and t'other the engineer."

"Can you give me their names?"

"Yes," pulling out a book, and consulting it. "Leon Leroy and George Starr."

"You can go."

During the several hours which Roswell spent with May, he was much preoccupied, and once or twice he so totally forgot the presence of May that he ground his teeth, and muttered aloud:

"Surely Scip must be mistaken. It cannot be that fortune plays into my hands, when years of unremitting toil resulted only in disappointment. But if it is him—if it is——"

He ground his teeth savagely, sprang to his feet, and commenced striding to and fro.

"Blood shall flow—blood shall flow!—the prophecy shall be fulfilled!"

A deep and terrible passion seemed to be seething in Roswell's heart, for his face was convulsed, and his eyes were burning with a lurid glare.

His appearance smote the heart of the gentle girl with terror.

"Uncle—uncle—please don't look so terrible," she pleaded.

Roswell started, bit his lip, and seemed to curse himself beneath his breath for having forgotten her presence.

"Have I been talking aloud?" he demanded, in an angry tone. "Did I say anything?"

"Nothing of any importance," she returned, and then burst into tears.

Instantly this man of extreme passions melted, and was as soft and tender as a mother who croons over her babe.

"Forgive me, little one, I did not mean to frighten you," he kindly said, and until he left kept endeavoring to remove the impression left by his harsh words.

The Hawk was at last ready to leave. Kissing May good-bye, Roswell moodily stalked to the dock, where he found Scip.

"Will blood run?"

So Scip asked, and in his tone there was an accent that was almost fiendish.

"Ay, blood shall run," with which reply he stepped on board.

In a few minutes more the Hawk was standing out into the lake, and when clear of the island was headed for the straits.

In these a halt was made, and into the small boat descended Jack Bolen and four of the Hawk's crew.

"You understand your duty, Jack?" was the captain's parting words.

"I do."

The five were set ashore, and the Hawk proceeded on her way through the strait.

"Well, boys, this is a wild enough place," said Jack, looking around at the spot where they had landed. "Well, let's be getting on; we've got a long tramp ahead of us afore we reach a civilized town."

"Where you'll be apt to stay longer than you expect, I'm thinking," reflected one of the others. "Curse you, Jack Bolen! I've never forgotten the day you flogged me, and now that the chance is flung in my way, I'm going to betray you to the officers."

Never suspecting that in their midst was an intended traitor, the smugglers trudged on for some miles, and then entered a town which shall be nameless.

It was just growing dark, and it was intended to remain here all night.

Rooms were engaged at a second-class hotel, and then the smugglers disposed of themselves as they pleased.

Four of their number had finally collected, and were engaged in playing cards in the hotel sitting-room, when the door of the room opened, admitting the traitor and eight officers, some of them ordinary farmers hastily sworn in for the occasion.

"There they are!" cried the traitor, pointing at them. "Arrest them! I declare them to be smugglers and pirates!"

"Treacherous hound!" yelled Jack Bolen, springing to his feet. "Draw, boys, draw, and the devil gets the soul of the man who bars our way hence!"

The smugglers made a break toward a window, but the officers sprang to head them off.

"You tempt your fate—take it!"

Crack!

Crack, crack!

"This for you—traitor!"

Crack!

The treacherous smuggler uttered a wild cry, flung up his arms, and then falling, lay there on the floor weltering in his blood.

"Now, then—all together!" shrieked Jack Bolen, and the daring quartette flung themselves forward with the swiftness and fierceness of a tornado.

CHAPTER IX.

KIDNAPPERS.

ALL on board the Sprite were in momentary expectation of hearing a pistol shot, and seeing Dederick sink beneath the surface with a bullet in his brain.

But in this they were mistaken.

With an oath or two the man who was holding the revolver at Dederick's head withdrew the weapon and concealed it again.

"Let go!" he now hoarsely ordered the Dutchman. "Let go—and swim for your life as you deserve!"

With all his clothing on, and his boots as well, it would be no easy task to swim to the side of the Sprite, and Dederick hesitated about complying.

"Come, now?" said the other grimly. "I give you a chance for your life, which you should consider as an extremely fortunate circumstance. Swim—let go now—or I'll crack your knuckles, which will cramp 'em so't they can't be used."

The Dutchman knew this would be the case, and with a groan he prepared to let go.

He looked up into the face above him. But it was hard and relentless, and had no more pity in it than if it had been carved in stone. It would be useless, Dederick decided mentally, to ask him to return nearer the Sprite.

Looking up into that stern face, Dederick was surprised to find that his life was spared.

"Let go!"

He knew that longer delay would only make matters worse, and he reluctantly let go of the small boat, which immediately shot away.

Dederick had no time to spare, as he well knew, and at once began to strike out toward the vessel; but it was almost impossible to remain afloat, let alone swim.

"Take off your boots!" shouted Leon.

"Vat I vill do with 'em? Hold dem in my teet?" panted Dederick.

"No; let them go to the bottom of the lake."

"Blitzen! Dey vos mine pest poots! Vat for you tooken me?"

Leon saw that the stubborn Dutchman might lose his life in trying to save his boots, and he called to Dederick to let his boots go and he would provide another pair of newer and better ones.

"Ish dot so? Newer and petter vons? Den dey must go!"

At once Dederick commenced a series of gymnastic exercises in the water, and finally succeeded in freeing himself of his boots, after which, although it was only by the hardest of labor, he managed to get near enough to the Sprite before giving out to get hold of a rope which was cast to him.

In a few minutes more he was on deck, dripping wet and exhausted.

Now, that Leon saw the faithful Dutchman in safety, he bethought him of the Sprite's condition.

A hasty examination showed that the water was slowly rising in the vessel's hold, which was proof sufficient that one or more auger holes had been bored through the Sprite's bottom.

Providing himself with a lantern, a hammer, some chisels, and several pieces of soft pine wood, he descended into the fore-castle.

A gurgling noise guided him to the spot, where the hole had been bored.

There was only one.

Making a shapely plug of the pine wood, he inserted it into the auger hole and drove it home tight, thus cutting off the ingress of water.

The pumps being started, the vessel was soon free of water.

Leon now turned his attention to the hoisting of the anchor, which proved to be a long and tedious task, as on examination he found that to reach bottom all the chain had been paid out except about six fathoms.

There were supposed to be on board of the Sprite at the time of

the purchase one hundred and fifty fathoms of cable, or nine hundred feet. And nearly all of this had to be hauled in.

The villains had been fortunate in finding bottom at all with that many fathoms of chain, for in some places Lake Michigan is fifteen hundred feet in depth.

The small boat meanwhile was rapidly diminishing in size as the distance increased, and from having become a mere black speck was finally lost to sight entirely.

The anchor having been finally catted, and everything being again straight, the Sprite was headed further into the strait.

The next day they were at Mackinaw, and here remained one day. Then, returning again to the lake, they made brief stops at Little Traverse Bay and at Grand Traverse Bay, after which they headed for Milwaukee.

The latter place was reached in due season, and the Sprite's passengers declared themselves much pleased with their trip, considering their dangers, now that they were passed, as so much spice to the affair to give it a zest.

"And have you learned enough about the smugglers?" asked Leon, a merry twinkle in his eyes. (They had not gone a step out of their way on this score.)

"Oh, yes; sufficient to make an elaborate report," was the reply. "By the way, I shouldn't wonder if those four fellows were smuggler spies, or in some way connected with them."

"I don't know," said Leon, his face at once becoming grave. "To me the whole affair was inexplicable, and I am satisfied that beneath their visit is an unraveled mystery."

It certainly was a very queer affair, taken as a whole. And as such it was voted by all concerned in it, and by the few who heard the narration of what had occurred.

Bidding good-by to his passengers, Leon watched the train which the next day swiftly bore them away toward Chicago, whence they were to return East.

The next day the Sprite was chartered by another party of gentlemen, who wished to be taken some distance up the lake, to be gone two weeks or more.

They were to start on Thursday morning, it then being Tuesday.

Warmly had the two lads been welcomed home, where they took care to so color the relation of what had occurred, as not to raise any undue alarm concerning their safety when absent on these trips.

So very pleasant was it to be idlers again for a time, that the Sprite was left under the guardianship of Dederick, while they remained at home.

But on Wednesday evening, as they were to make a start early the next morning, George thought it would be well to go on board and get his fires ready for starting.

He delayed going on board until about nine o'clock, and the night being without a moon it was very dark in the neighborhood of the dock.

Dederick was found on the alert, for he hailed George the moment he came near the Sprite.

"You vos agoin' for to fix de fires, eh?" he repeated, when George stated why he had come on board. "Den ve vill start in de morning?"

"Yes."

"Den, vile you is aboard, I dinks me dot I go up by der streed und got me some smoke tobak."

"Very well," said George, and off Dederick went.

The Dutchman had not returned by the time George had got his kindlings laid and the fire ready for setting a match to.

As he was pacing the deck he heard a step outside on the dock, which he naturally supposed to be that of Dederick.

The person sprang aboard and entered through the door.

At precisely the same moment there came a slight jar at the outside guard of the vessel, and then George heard a number of persons hastily clambering up on deck.

He was a little startled, but could not dream of danger in such a place, and turned to speak to Dederick.

A single lantern, suspended from a hook in one of the slender beams overhead, shed a sickly light over a contracted portion of the deck. But sickly as the light was, it was sufficient to discern that it was not Dederick toward whom he had turned.

He gave a start of mingled surprise and alarm. Just then the door

opened and half a dozen men, who had come in a small boat, rushed forward as the single individual uttered a guttural exclamation.

Starr was unarmed, as he remembered with a groan. But, quickly clenching his fists, he stood on guard, and when they sprang toward him—

Spat—spat—spat!

"Curse him! He hits hard!" angrily growled someone.

"Careful!" said a deep and stern voice. "Careful! Remember my orders!"

"Help—help!" from Starr.

Somebody clapped his hands.

There was a simultaneous rush, and Starr was caught hold of and choked into silence, which being accomplished, the grip on his throat was released.

He was then hurried across the deck, and dropped into a small boat.

"Be silent—make no noise—submit quietly to your fate, and not a hair of your head shall be harmed. But at your peril attempt to thwart my will!" said a deep voice, expressing power and determination. "Give way, boys!" and off into the lake the kidnapped engineer was carried.

What could they want of him?

CHAPTER X.

THE VEILED WOMAN.

"SHORGE—Shorge!"

Dederick thus called as he boarded the Sprite, after having been up the street after some smoking tobacco.

"Shorge—Shorge!"

But George made no reply.

Thinking it strange, yet not feeling alarmed, Dederick went toward the engine-room—found it empty—then saw the doors open that led to the outer guards—and hastened thither.

George was not there, but out on the lake he heard the sound of oars, although, strain his gaze as he might, he could not pierce the darkness and see the boat.

Dederick was a typical Dutchman, short in stature, moon-faced, with puffy cheeks full of color, and little, sunken, twinkling blue eyes.

Most people would have supposed him to be very slow and dull.

On the contrary, however, he was as shrewd and quick-witted as most people; and as he never got ruffled, was more than ordinarily clear-headed.

This latter fact made it possible for him to con over the situation very rapidly.

George would not have left the vessel of his own accord, until he (Dederick) had returned.

Yet gone he was.

Consequently it was not of his own accord.

The open door to the outer guard, which would have been used in case of approach from the lake; the sound of oars at some distance; the length of time which had elapsed, all pointed—in Dederick's mind—to the conclusion that George had been carried away captive by some person or persons who had boarded the Sprite from a small boat.

All this Dederick felt assured of; but, next, what was he to do?

There was only one course for him to pursue, and that was to inform Leon; so, locking the doors of the boat, he hurried up into the city.

Let us precede him.

Leon had been out, and had returned to the house at about the time George had left for the purpose of fixing his fires for the morning.

A short time later, while Mr. and Mrs. Starr and Leon were in the family sitting-room, there was a ring at the door bell.

"I wonder who it can be?" said Mrs. Starr, and glanced inquiringly up when the servant entered, a few seconds later.

"A lady, sir, to see you," the girl said, addressing Mr. Starr.

"A lady to see me?"

"Yes, sir."

"Show her in here."

"She said she wanted to see you in private, sir."

"On business?"

"Yes, sir."

Mr. Starr was puzzled, but at once arose and followed the servant from the room.

Entering the parlor, he found awaiting him a deeply-veiled woman.

"Is this Mr. Starr?" asked a sweet and tremulous voice.

"It is," he answered. "Can I do anything for you?" as he scanned the person narrowly, mentally reaching the conclusion that she must be quite young, which her figure seemed to show.

"You can do something for me," she said, earnestly. "You have under your charge, as a ward, a young man named Leon Leroy."

"He is hardly my ward," returned Mr. Starr. "He lives in my family, and is attached to us—"

"But you have influence over him; what you said would have weight with him?" she interrupted, in an eager tone.

"Some influence, certainly," he returned. "But what is the reason of all this? Explain, now, what is it that you want?"

"I want to save him from a great peril," she said, earnestly.

"Who are you that you possess so great an interest in him?" he pointedly asked.

For a second or two the veiled visitor appeared to be confused by the questions, and then she appeared to recover her self-possession.

"It is useless, sir, to question me. I shall go as I came—unknown to you."

"And this danger you speak of?"

"He must be guarded from it. Perhaps it has already encompassed him! Tell me, is he now in your house?"

"He is."

"That is well. Sir, bid him never leave the house at night without a sufficient escort with him, and never venture near to the docks, where he might be seized and conveyed on board a vessel in waiting."

"Kidnapped you mean?"

"Yes. Kidnapped."

"But why should any one desire to spirit him away?"

She made an impatient gesture with her hand and then resumed:

"Tell him also not to venture far away from the city in the Sprite; not to be out in her at night; not to approach the upper end of the lake; to avoid Fox Isles as he would the plague; not to venture into the straits; and above all, not to venture into Canadian waters."

"Who are you, who seem to be so well informed concerning this young man? Who are you that you seem to know more of him than he knows of himself?"

"Peace!" she quickly rejoined. "Will you do as I ask you? Will you advise him as I have said?"

"Why should I? How do I know but this is all the outgrowth of some useless fear of yours? Show me wherein exists the necessity, and I will pledge my word to do as you say."

She clasped her hands, and then stamped her foot, the one caused by despair, the other by anger.

"I can say no more," she then said, arising to take her leave.

"But, Mr. Starr, for the sake of Heaven—if you have any love for Leon Leroy—heed my injunctions concerning him."

She stepped from the parlor, and in the hall encountered Leon, who was just about to go up-stairs for some purpose.

At sight of him the lady started—was visibly agitated—some speech or other trembled on her lips, but there was stifled. Leon, seeing this pantomime, had paused.

One moment they faced each other, and then the woman's hand flew upward, seized and raised the veil so that Leon—and he alone—was able to obtain a fleeting glance of an exquisite face and a pair of lustrous dark eyes, which as they rested on him, seemed filled with an expression of affection.

Then the veil was dropped.

"Leon Leroy, attend closely to what this gentleman shall advise you to do. Adieu! God bless you all!"

With this benediction on her lips she left the house. Leon caught up his hat from the hall rack and would have followed her, but, only a few feet from the house she met a man, and turning, she saw Leon, and by a wave of her hand warned him not to follow them.

Returning to the sitting-room, they were all discussing this mysterious visitor, when the door bell rang again, and Dederick was admitted.

Leon sprang to his feet the moment he caught sight of the Dutchman's face, for it spoke as plainly as words, and said that something awful had happened.

In his broken language Dederick related what had occurred.

Instantly Mr. Starr and Leon started with him back to the Sprite, and on the way picked up several men for whose services they thought it possible they might have need.

On reaching the Sprite a strict search was instituted for George, Dederick not having made one.

But no George was to be found.

Leon took down the deck lantern and surveyed the course from the engine-room to the outer guard.

Only the day before Dederick had thoroughly scrubbed the decks, until they were as fresh and clean as a dining-table; and Leon was able, after an examination, to positively assert that at least four or five men had passed over the portion of deck alluded to.

A fear that George might have gone out on the guard and fallen overboard was thus set at rest. But as an offset, they were now convinced that he had been carried away by kidnappers.

At once, Mr. Starr's mind reverted to what the veiled lady had said, and he wondered if Leon was not the one they had intended to carry off.

"Dederick is positive about having heard the sound of oars, as a boat was pulled out into the lake. We must follow at once," said Leon, in a decided tone. "The rascals can hardly have got out of reach yet."

"What's that?" said Mr. Starr, as the last word of Leon was falling from his lips. He referred to a jarring sound against the guard.

Then from the outer guard walked into the light of the lantern—George Starr!

How had he escaped?

CHAPTER XI.

THE VILLAINOUS QUARTETTE.

THE summary punishment of the treacherous smuggler by his former companions, together with the sight of blood, struck fear into the hearts of the peaceable farmers and such like, who had been hastily sworn in to assist the regular officers in capturing the smugglers.

Full of valor at first, the cracking of pistols and the sight of death caused their courage to ooze out through their finger ends, and they at once fell back when Jack Bolen led the fierce onslaught.

Crack!

Crack!

"Hurrah, boys!" shouted Jack. "Don't shoot any man of 'em except to save your own lives, and then don't hesitate."

As for Jack himself, he kept his head, and remained perfectly cool throughout the whole exciting scene.

When he fired he sent his bullets close enough to frighten, but not mortally wound his antagonists, and when one of his bullets skinned the top of a deputy's ear, they all turned tail and fled.

"Ha—ha!" roared Jack, "we're on even terms now. At them, boys! Out of the way! Are ye fools that ye try to stop us? Out of our way and not a man of you shall be harmed, but try to stop us again and you shall pay the penalty."

The regular officers were men not deficient in courage, but they knew the desperate character of these smugglers, and thinking discretion the better part of valor, they ceased all efforts to prevent the egress of the smugglers after two of their number had been winged.

"Follow me, my hearties!" cried Jack Bolen, and dashed into the street, followed by his comrades.

A crowd was gathering, drawn thither by the pistol shots, but these fell back before the threatening of Bolen and the flourishings of his revolver.

A path was opened for them, and toward the water-side they scampered at a lively pace.

There half a dozen small sailing crafts were moored.

Selecting one at random—a small, cat-rigged craft—they hastily raised the sail. A good stiff breeze was blowing, and at once filled the sail, and then away danced the little craft over the regular swells.

Quickly a pursuing party was organized, but it could not get a start until long after the little craft of the smugglers was out of sight.

Jack Bolen felt no concern whatever about their safety, after knowing himself to be out of sight before any pursuit was commenced.

Then they spoke of the traitorous wretch, and voted that he had received a just reward for his treachery.

Late the next day they caught a glimpse of the Sprite as she lay in a little harbor.

"Ha!" exclaimed Jack, "our search is at an end much sooner than I expected."

Abandoning the boat in which they had made their escape, they made their way on foot to the vicinity of the Sprite, and these were the four villains who had been thwarted when they endeavored to obtain possession of her.

Jack Bolen it was who was shrewd enough to devise a means of releasing themselves from the power of Leon and his companions in the manner already related.

After having forced Dederick to take that swin for life, Jack gave orders for those who handled the oars to pull for all they were worth, fearing that the Sprite might be got into condition for pursuit, and be enabled to overtake them before they reached the shore.

They were not pursued, however, Leon regarding it as useless, and the smugglers reached the shore in safety.

Here Jack Bolen, walking apart from the others, held a conference with himself.

"There's no use of making another attempt at present," he finally told himself. "They will be on their guard now, and it would be next to impossible to surprise them."

A few minutes longer thus employed in walking, and then he muttered aloud:

"The plan might work, but as the captain has positively forbidden the shedding of any blood, I'll not try it."

"Well, Jack," inquired one of the others, who had guessed why the lieutenant of the Hawk was communing with himself, "which way next?"

"Back to the island to wait for the Hawk's return," was the reply.

"What—pull all the way there?" in a lugubrious tone.

"No; we will try to rig up some kind of a sail."

This was finally accomplished, and then they coasted along the east shore of the lake until opposite Fox Isles, when they at once stood away for them.

Arrived at the island, they took things comfortably until the Hawk put in an appearance again, when Jack and Captain Roswell had a long conversation.

The latter personage was much disappointed with the result of Jack's expedition, but forebore to blame him.

Again the Hawk departed on an expedition to Canadian shores. During her absence everything moved along on the island without accident or incident, save that the Gull ran in for a cargo of goods.

At the expected time the Hawk once again ran in and fastened to the dock in the little harbor of the island.

"Do you wish to go with us on this trip?" inquired the captain of May.

"I should like to escape for a while from the loneliness of the island, uncle, but I do not wish by my presence on board to appear to countenance the trade you are pursuing."

Captain Roswell smiled.

"You will not be called upon to countenance me, as my present trip is to Milwaukee. I thought that perhaps you might wish to visit some of the stores."

"So I should."

"Then I'll consider it as settled that you are to bear us company, and will have the necessary preparations made."

An hour later May went on board. Her coming was the signal for casting off the lines, and soon they were under way.

The Hawk's progress was so regulated that Milwaukee was reached just after dusk. May was put ashore in a small boat, and being allowed to select her own escort while on shore, fixed her choice on a young fellow whom she had attended carefully during a fever caused by a wound, and who was devoted to her in consequence.

During the voyage she had overheard some remarks which had passed between her uncle and Jack Bolen, and had eagerly drank in some chance soliloquies of her uncle.

It is said that "two and two make four." And in the same way, a lot of words selected at random, joined together properly, made a story. And May, patching together odd words and broken sentences, now knew something concerning the mystery of Leon Leroy's life.

Hastily attending to the little shopping she had to do, she had prevailed on her attendant to allow her to visit Mr. Starr.

"It's agin the cap'n's orders, and he'd make it hot for me if he found out."

"None shall know; you will not tell of it, and I will be secret as the grave."

Having left Mr. Starr's house, she and her attendant hastened to where a boat awaited their return, and were conveyed on board the Hawk.

Hardly had they reached the vessel's deck, when another small boat lightly fetched up against her side.

A moment later the commanding figure of Captain Roswell appeared over the gunwale, followed by a youthful and gracefully moving person.

It was George Starr.

Now he for the first time broke the silence which had been so sternly enjoined on him; facing Captain Roswell, he demanded:

"Sir, what is the meaning of this outrage?"

"You will learn in due season," was the quiet and calm return.

"Cap'n, dat not like de voice," now was heard in a harsh whisper, the speaker being Scip, the negro, who resembled an animal in his acuteness of hearing and devotion to his master.

Captain Roswell started violently. He had had many evidences of the acuteness of Scip's ears, and he snatched up a lantern, exclaiming:

"Can it be possible that we have made a mistake?"

He turned the rays of light into Starr's face, and bent a long and earnest gaze on every feature.

"Dat not he," said the negro.

Something like a muttered oath fell from Roswell's lips as he became convinced that a mistake had been made.

"Sir, I repeat—what is the meaning of this outrage?"

"We have made a blunder."

"I should think you had," returned George. "And now, sir, will you be so kind as to set me ashore?"

"Listen to me!" said Captain Roswell, sternly. "On one condition you shall return unharmed to the shore, and that is, that you pledge me your word not to reveal to any living person what has befallen you."

"That I refuse to do."

"As you please," with a shrug of the shoulders. "If you refuse, my plans are such that you will be kept a prisoner, in close confinement, for an indefinite length of time, and in case of any attempt to escape, you would be instantly killed. I mean you no harm, will do you no unkindness, even, if it can be avoided; but no mortal man or men can turn me aside or alter my plans one iota, which might be the case if I let you go without a pledge. Now take your choice. But my advice is, give me your pledge."

"And would you accept it?" said George, in surprise.

"I would."

"And suppose we were to meet again, and I should——"

"Should what?"

"Guessing who and what you are, should denounce you, or give you battle."

"Be my enemy until death, if you choose," was the reply.

"I pledge my word," said George.

May breathed a deep sigh of relief as he said this. Captain Roswell waved his hand, and George, having entered the small boat, was conveyed ashore.

The sky was rapidly clouding up, and the night so dark in consequence, that the men in the small boat found some difficulty in returning to the Hawk's side, as she showed no lights to guide them.

This fact of showing no lights involved them in unexpected peril as they were working out into the lake.

An incoming vessel suddenly ran into them.

Crash-sh-sh!

The rending and breaking of timbers and planks was something terrible; and then followed the wild cry that the Hawk was sinking.

When the first agitation and excitement consequent on his unexpected return had somewhat subsided, he was asked where he had been and what had happened.

"It is for your ears and Leon's only," he said, in reply to a question of his father's. "I am here before you safe and sound, so curb your curiosity. Give Dederick a couple of dollars, and let him and these gentlemen go and have a drink or two."

"Lager—bully vas dot lager!" murmured the Dutchman, and soon the Sprite was rid of all but Mr. Starr, Leon and George.

"You must know that you gave us quite a fright," said Mr. Starr. "Dederick bolted in a little while ago saying that you had been kidnapped. Let us know all about it."

"Father, you see me here safe and sound. Ask me no further questions, for I cannot answer them, neither to you nor to Leon."

Mr. Starr and Leon both gazed at him in a puzzled manner.

"I see that you cannot understand why this is so; but it is. Nor have I taken leave of my senses, as your looks seem to imply. Something has happened to-night—something very strange and inexplicable—but the knowledge must be kept to myself, must remain a secret, which my lips must never knowingly reveal."

After having listened to this plain and unequivocal statement of the case, Mr. Starr and Leon saw that questioning would be useless and desisted, though they found it impossible to drive it from their minds.

Mr. Starr now brought up the subject of the Unknown's (so they had named her) visit, and related her warning in her words as nearly as he could recollect them.

Despite the fact that the Unknown would assign no reasons for her warning, Mr. Starr could not help being deeply impressed by it, and indeed suggested that Leon and George should not fulfill their contract with the gentlemen who were to leave in the Sprite the next morning.

"It is for your sake, Leon, that I advise this. It is you, and not George, who is threatened by this danger."

"So far, sir, as I am concerned, I am not afraid to encounter it, and, George being willing, to-morrow morning we go up the lake. I would not break my contract with these gentlemen for anything."

No argument could alter this resolution of Leon's to stick to the terms of his charter, especially when George had promptly said:

"Where Leon goes, I go."

The only precaution they took in addition to those already made was to engage another deck-hand, as they were well able to do out of the profits of the Sprite.

While returning homeward the rain began to fall. But Mr. Starr prophesied that it would soon pass over, as it was only a shower.

That he was not a bad weather prophet was evidenced by the beautiful dawn which followed.

The young fellows were astir early, and were in readiness for a start when the charterers came on board.

Of these latter Leon and George had seen but one, he who had chartered the vessel.

According to his own description his name was Robert Taylor, and he was from New Orleans, as, also, were his companions.

Now that Leon saw them all together his mind misgave him. All were well dressed, and appeared to be gentlemen; yet, withal, there was something about them which he did not like.

For fear of doing them injustice, he kept his reflections to himself, secretly determining to keep a sharp watch over them.

Just as they were ready to cast off the lines, a man sauntered carelessly on the dock.

Leon at once recognized him as an officer of the law, and from his manner was convinced that he wished to speak privately to him.

"What ho, there!" called Leon.

"Ay—ay, sir!" was the prompt reply, accompanied by a wink, and then the fellow advanced.

"Can you take a message for me?" inquired Leon. "I've forgotten something, and want to send word to Mr. Starr."

"I'll take it if you pay for it," was the reply, in a rather disobliging tone, and he stepped on board.

During this colloquy Leon observed that Taylor was closely watching them, and now taking out a blank book, he scribbled a few words on a leaf, and then tore it out.

Passing it over to the officer, with a quarter of a dollar, he asked in a low tone:

"Anything wrong?"

CHAPTER XII.

UP THE LAKE AGAIN.

WHEN assured that they really beheld George, all those on board the Sprite made a rush for him, Leon being the first to grasp his hand.

"I can't say," was the equally low reply; "but I've had my suspicions aroused concerning this Taylor, and couldn't let you go without putting you on your guard."

"Much obliged. You'll deliver this message at once?" this last in a louder tone.

"I will, sir," and he jumped ashore.

"Cast off!"

The lines were thrown off, except the stern line—a "backing line," as boatmen call it.

Clang—clang!

George obeyed the order, and the wheels turning backward threw the Sprite's head away from the dock.

Clang!

The wheels stopped.

With a whirr the steering wheel flew around, and the chains rattled through the long tubes.

Clang!

Steam was slowly admitted, the wheels turned forward, and the Sprite forged slowly ahead.

Ting-a-ling-a-ling!

It was the jingle bell.

A moment, and then the eccentrics were hooked on with a clash, the exhaust became more steady and hard, and the spray began to dance before the vessel's prow.

By Taylor's orders the Sprite was headed away for the strait, south of which the charterers said they did not wish to stop.

They had not left Milwaukee many miles behind them when Dederick entered the pilot-house with a dissatisfied expression on his full-moon face.

"Cap'n, I don'd vas like dem fellers," he remarked, shaking his head.

"Have you seen anything out of the way?" inquired Leon, earnestly.

"No; but I don'd like dem all de same," in a dogged way.

"Don't say anything, then, but go below and keep a close watch on them, for I myself feel the same way."

These premonitions of coming evil were destined to receive startling verification before very long.

About midnight Leon feared most that an attack would be made, if made at all. But as one o'clock passed in safety, and two passed, and three, he began to feel easier in mind.

He made a mistake in thus allowing himself to be lulled into a feeling of security.

Day was already breaking when there was a stir in the fore-castle, where Dederick was asleep.

"Curse it!" growled a low voice, as the speaker paused to listen if Dederick had been aroused.

But the Dutchman slept soundly, nor knew of the presence of an enemy until he was pounced upon and bound hand and foot, and gagged in addition.

The second deck-hand chanced to descend into the fore-castle as they finished with Dederick, and he was soon fixed in the same way.

Now Taylor and his gang ascended to the main deck, and taking Starr by surprise, soon had him bound and helpless.

"Carry the fellow into the fore-castle with the others," ordered Taylor; "and you, Jim, stay here to handle the engine."

When George had been disposed of as ordered, the five desperadoes—for such they were, in every sense of the word—ascended to the hurricane deck, and crept softly along toward the pilot-house.

The door of the latter stood open.

Taking advantage of this, they suddenly dashed in on Leon.

Spat, spat! Manfully and bravely Leon struck out in defense of his liberty, but against so many he was powerless. Angered at his resistance, one who had received a black eye, wanted to knife him, but was restrained by the harsh order of Taylor.

In two minutes Leon was bound hand and foot, conveyed to the main deck, and tumbled roughly into the fore-castle, thumping down the steep steps, and nearly breaking his neck.

Who and what were these villains, and what was their purpose in thus making captives of the Sprite's crew?

This became an absorbing question, but none could even guess what was to follow.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE RESCUERS.

A GLOOMIER-MINDED quartette than the crew of the Sprite, bound hand and foot in the fore-castle, it would have been very hard to find.

For some time very little was said, except by Dederick, who addressed himself in some very choice and lowly-uttered Dutch oaths, which he was enabled to do as he had partially worked the gag out of his mouth.

Leon commenced with himself, as also did George Starr.

The latter imagined that these fellows were in league with the same man who had kidnapped him by mistake. He suspected, and not without foundation, that it had then been intended to carry off Leon.

What was more natural, then, than that the same object was aimed at now, namely, the possession of Leon's person, for some purpose to him unknown?

Some such idea was also working its way through Leon's mind, and he began reproaching himself lest he had been the innocent means of placing in peril the lives of the others.

While speculating over the occurrence, a visit was paid them by the person who had chartered the vessel—the Mr. Taylor, so-called.

"Well, sir," demanded Leon, with flashing eyes, "what is the meaning of this outrage?"

"For the present that is a secret," was the quiet reply. "It is sufficient for you to know that we desired the use of a steamboat for a few days, and adopted this means of procuring one."

"It is for some rascally purpose, then, or you would not have acted thus."

"Never mind our purpose. And accept a bit of advice which I shall give you, which is to keep a civil tongue in your head. We intend no harm to any of you, or to the vessel. When our purpose is accomplished we shall bid you good-by, freeing you and returning the vessel in as good order as when we seized her."

"And the conditions—for, of course, you have conditions to make?"

"I have. They are that you and your crew remain closely here in the fore-castle, without making any attempt to escape, or give an alarm. And I say plainly that in case of bad faith on your parts, we are not the ones to hesitate, but will spill your blood without wasting further time or words."

There was no disguising the fact that they were in the power of these villains, and Leon accepted the prescribed conditions for himself and his companions.

"I can rely on your keeping your word as to the returning of the Sprite to our charge?" he added.

"You can."

"And you mean no personal harm to any one of us?" he said, pointedly.

"Again I repeat—we do not."

These last two replies eased the minds of Leon and George not a little, and they determined to hope for the best.

Before leaving them, Taylor relieved them of the gags and the bonds about their ankles, which permitted them to converse freely and to move around. He was also kind enough to leave the fore-castle hatch raised, permitting the ingress of light and fresh air; but in case any of them attempted emerging, it was to be closed at once.

While Leon and Starr conned over the situation and tried to solve the mystery in connection with it, the Sprite, under charge of a new pilot and engineer, was swiftly running northward, and gradually approaching the Michigan shore in an oblique direction.

Taylor occupied the wheel-house with the new steersman, and a low but deeply interesting conversation was held between them for hours.

Late in the afternoon the pilot put his mouth to the tube.

"Halloo, Dick!"

"Ay—ay!" came back the reply.

"Cut off a little steam; we are making about a mile an hour too much speed."

"Correct," was the rejoinder, and the Sprite lost a little of her headway as the usurper of George's place cut off part of the steam.

About two hours past sunset Taylor approached the fore-castle and called down to Leon.

"Ay—ay!" answered the latter.

"I am going to close the hatch. We are about to make a landing, and see to it that you create no alarm, or your lives must pay the forfeit!"

In the fore-castle all was dark as Egypt when the hatch was closed. Listening, they could hear the bell given to slow down, and then another to stop, and in a few minutes all knew that a landing had been made.

Unaware of at what place they were, Leon remained silent, and kept the others quiet also. Had he known to a certainty that their cries would be heard, he would not have hesitated to disregard Taylor's orders and threats, and take the chances. But there might not be a living soul within half a mile except the captors of the Sprite, so he chose the safest course and remained perfectly silent.

Little did Leon suppose that all but one of the captors had left the vessel. Had he been aware of the fact, he would certainly have led a hope—however forlorn—aiming at recapturing the Sprite.

It was a little lake village dock to which the Sprite had been fastened, the village lying fully half a mile away. While the town shall remain nameless, we will describe it in so far as to say that it was the county seat of the county in which it was situated, and contained the court-house and jail.

Straight back to the village Taylor and his companions made their way, and having gone to a tavern, they called for a private room, and ordered a quart of whisky.

This the landlord gave them the credit of guzzling; but he was, in reality, altogether mistaken, as it was emptied out of the window. However, Taylor and the rest were soon singing, and making as merry as though each man had drank a full share of the liquid fire.

It was nearly midnight before they left the tavern, by which time every other habitation in the place was wrapped in darkness and silence.

Instead of turning their steps in the direction of the lake, they passed to the southward of the village until they came to the court-house, and the jail, which adjoins it, which stood in a lonely place, some little distance from buildings of any kind.

"So far, we have done well," said Taylor, in a congratulatory tone, in which a trifling hoarseness, indicating anxiety, was visible. "Now, if we can only accomplish our main object——"

"We can and must!" broke in one of the others, in a grim voice.

Stealing up to the court-house, each man of them began drawing out some kind of an implement, which had been concealed up to this time.

One had a "jimmy;" another a hoe and bit; another, something else—a crowbar, and so on, until the principal and necessary tools for forcing a building were all brought to view.

A member of the gang lay in one of the cells of the jail, condemned to die on the coming Friday, and he would surely be hung unless their plan of rescue met with success.

It lacked a few minutes of the hour of one, when one of the men drew back from a window with an exclamation of satisfaction.

"It is done!" he said, with a chuckle.

The window had been forced, and a way was opened by which they could enter the basement of the court-house.

They entered without hesitation, and by aid of a dark lantern found their way up-stairs, and finally paused before the door that permitted communication between court-house and jail.

Here they paused, in doubt as to whether they should use force or strategy. Deciding on the latter, they knocked loudly on the shut iron door, until the jailer was aroused.

His fears set at rest because the knocks came from within the court house, supposing that some official was there to deliver another prisoner to his keeping, he unbarred and opened the door.

Spat! Thud!

First he received a heavy blow between the eyes from Taylor's clenched fist, then got a staggering stroke from the butt of a revolver, which was hastily followed up, stretching him senseless on the floor.

Taylor quickly possessed himself of the jailer's bunch of keys, and flew to the cell where their comrade was confined.

Five minutes later they were swiftly retreating toward the Sprite, followed by the shrill cries of the jailer, when consciousness had returned.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE REVENUE MEN.

"THE Hawk is sinking!"

This cry rang through the smuggling vessel immediately after the collision, paralyzing her crew, causing a panic among them.

For a full minute the men stood like statues, and then a rush was made for the small boats.

But there was one man among them who never lost his presence of mind, and that was Captain Roswell. Hardly had the shock of the collision been felt ere he was beside the wheel, and his strong hand became the vessel's master.

A quick and intelligent move or two, and then the vessels cleared each other, instead of interlocking in each other's rigging.

It was just at this moment of clearing that the terrifying cry had arisen that the Hawk was sinking.

When the men sprang to the small boats, so did Captain Roswell.

Planting himself before the frightened men, he sternly cried:

"Back with you—back, I say! There is no danger! We were not struck below the water line! Are ye all fools and cowards?"

But the panic was not yet allayed, and the men continued to press forward.

Captain Roswell now drew his revolvers, and with one in each hand, he swore a fearful oath to shoot the first man who moved another step forward.

None of them had ever seen the captain shed blood, but they stood deeply in awe of him, and from the tone of his voice knew that his threats were not mere idle words.

Calling one of the men by name, he ordered him to go into the vessel's hold, and report how much water it contained, and if any was entering.

Doing as ordered, the man shouted up from the hold that it was bone-dry; that not a teacupful of water was flowing in.

"Ahoy!" now yelled somebody from the other vessel, whose crew were just recovering from a similar fright.

"Ahoy yourself!" shouted Roswell.

"Are you in any danger?"

"No."

"What vessel is that?"

"The Satan."

"I don't know you, but you must pay for the damage done us, for you had no lights up."

"All right. Begin suit as soon as you please," returned Captain Roswell; and then to Jack Bolen at the wheel: "Keep her well away, Jack; we don't want to come into any further contact with this other vessel, nor do we wish any better acquaintance with her than we now have."

"Ay—ay, sir!"

The other vessel had been brought about, and was now approaching the spot where the collision had occurred.

"Ahoy!" called her captain, but this time received no reply.

Guessing that the Hawk was trying to elude him, the other captain swore roundly, and locating the Hawk by the noises made on board of her, commenced to give chase.

The Hawk was much the faster sailer of the two, and by showing no lights, kept the other from getting at her exact position, and her course. Favored, also, by the dense darkness, and the falling rain, it was not more than an hour before the smuggler was safe from pursuit.

An examination, which Captain Roswell had meanwhile made, resulted in the discovery that the Hawk's bowsprit had been very badly sprung, so much so, in fact, that he finally ordered the jib to be reefed, not daring to subject the bowsprit to the ordinary strain.

"Unfortunate as it is," he told Jack Bolen, "we shall have to lay off until a new bowsprit can be put in. Keep her away for the island, where I will go ashore with a part of the crew, leaving you to take her to some out-of-the-way ship yard up the lake."

Jack signified his acquiescence, and the captain turned to May Meredith, who stood in the cabin door.

Throughout the whole of those few exciting minutes which succeeded the collision, May had stood at this self same spot, and not once had exhibited fear. Perhaps her heart had beaten a little faster, perhaps her cheeks were paler than usual, but granting this, she gave

no other sign of feeling less secure than when sitting beside the table in the cave, a bright light at her elbow, and her fancy work in her lap.

Very little was there that ever escaped the captain's observation, and although he had his hands full at that exciting time, even this slight circumstance had not escaped him.

"May, I am more than pleased with you," he said, now speaking to her for the first time since the accident.

"Why so, sir?"

"I am pleased to see that, although a woman, you have your share of the courage which has always been the heritage of our family." And then, as if caused by some inward reflection, a gloomy expression came into his face, as he added in a lower tone: "Heaven grant that he may be no more unworthy of his descent than you."

May said nothing. A vague theory was forming in her mind, and she eagerly drank in every word he uttered, which could in any way corroborate it.

May's exhibition of courage seemed to cause her to rise several degrees in her uncle's estimation, for he was kinder to her than he had ever before been.

Time passed monotonously enough on board of the Hawk until Fox Isles were in sight, upon which came a bustle consequent upon the disembarking of so many on board of her.

Keeping on board only an ordinary crew for a craft of the Hawk's size, Jack Bolen was no sooner free to do so, than he piloted the vessel up the lake for the purpose already mentioned.

Captain Roswell tried to content himself on the island, but this inactivity was to him the hardest kind of work. May tried her best to entertain him, and cause the time to pass pleasantly, but his nature was a too serious and grand and gloomy one to be drawn from itself by the light words of a woman, even though they were filled with affection and the speaker was young and lovely.

Once, however, he unbent very much, was more like an ordinary human being than May had ever before seen him, and she ventured—though inwardly trembling at her temerity—to ask:

"Uncle, I heard you say a mistake had been made when you let go free the young man you had taken so much pains to capture. Who did you take him for?"

Fire at once flashed from Captain Roswell's eyes, and his face grew very stern.

"I will tell you. I thought him to be a lad called Leon Leroy."

"Called? Then that is not his right name?"

"No; although it is the only one he has ever known."

"And why do you wish to get him in your power?"

"Why?" and the smuggler captain's face became ferocious in expression as a tiger's—"why?" and he clutched May by the wrist—"why? Ay! I will tell you that. It is that blood may flow—that an oath of vengeance may be fulfilled—that one now dead may rest more easily in his grave that he is avenged! Begone now from my sight, and at your peril never ask me another question."

In terror May shrank from her uncle, and going to her room, did not emerge for hours afterwards.

During the night the Gull ran in, but was hardly fastened to the dock when there was a wild alarm. A steam tug, filled with revenue men, had tracked the Gull, and was now within the little bay.

Roswell heard the news with undaunted mien.

CHAPTER XV.

A WILD RACE.

A LAKE packet afforded the village communication with the outside world, and the vessel was due at 3 A. M.

The dock agent was astir and was engaged in scanning the water in search of her lights, when Taylor and his party, with the released prisoner, stepped on the dock.

The agent had heard the noise produced by their running, and their evident haste aroused his suspicions concerning them. Right on top of his newly-aroused suspicions came the hoarse cries of the aller, who was swiftly pursuing the rescuing party.

The agent sprang to the front and made it evident to them that he was going to intercept them if possible. Although a brave man he was a prudent one, and when Taylor threatened to kill him if he interfered, he wisely drew back out of harm's way, and if he did not deter, he at least did not assist them.

On board the Sprite Taylor and his companions quickly sprang, one of their number having hastily thrown off the lines.

Clang!

The engineer was at his post, he having been the one man left behind. He had kept up a good head of steam, and no sooner had the bell sounded than the wheels began to turn.

In a couple of minutes he got the jingle bell; with a clash the engine was "hooked on," and under the impulse of fresh steam the Sprite was sent along at a lively pace.

A mile from the dock they met the packet going into the village. She was a much larger vessel than the Sprite and a side-wheeler, being unlike most of the packets of the present day that ply the waters of the great inland seas.

Of all that had transpired that night, of course, Leon and his fellow prisoners were ignorant. They guessed, however, from the hurried return of Taylor's party and their getting under way at once, indicated the finale of the scheme which had prompted the villains to make themselves masters of the Sprite.

It was about an hour or a little more after their leaving the village dock, that the fore-castle hatch was raised.

"Awake down there?" inquired a hoarse voice, that belonged to a person who was in an anxious frame of mind.

"I wonder what's wrong?" thought Leon, and then aloud: "Aye, aye! What is it?"

"Come up on deck and bring the engineer with you."

For a moment or two Leon and George consulted in whispers as to the advisability of trusting themselves on deck.

"It will be best to do so, I think," finally said Leon. "Yes, let us go up."

So up they went.

Taylor met them, and uttered no word until he had cut the bonds which confined their hands.

"Now, then, pilot, do you see that?"

Leon's eyes flashed along in the direction Taylor's finger pointed out.

"Yes, I see something. Do you mean a vessel's lights?"

"I do. Well, she is pursuing us, and although this little craft is mighty smart, she can sail all around us."

"And what is it you want of us?"

"I'll tell you," in a dogged manner; "unless you can extricate your vessel and us from the clutches of the pursuers, we mean to destroy her."

"Destroy the Sprite?"

Leon would almost as soon have parted with his own life.

"But what can I do more than I am already doing?" asked Leon, presently, in a very grave tone. "The Sprite seems to be covering distance at a lively pace."

"So she is; but it is not fast enough. What you can do, I don't know—but you must do something. Are you not acquainted with some passage among the islands, large enough for the Sprite, but where the packet dares not follow?"

For a few fleeting seconds Leon was silent. A struggle was going on within him.

That these men were rascals, he already knew, and guessed that their present expedition had been an unlawful one. He disliked very much to assist such people to escape the clutches of the law; but the Sprite—her safety was the trump card.

"I'll save you if I can," he said, earnestly, facing Taylor.

"Can I depend on you?"

"I swear it."

"Come, then, to the pilot-house. And you will go to the engine-room; and you, too, must——"

"I will vouch for him," interrupted Leon. "Go, George, and do your level best."

Once in the pilot-house, Leon's first care was to take a good long look at the lights of the packet, and to make an estimate of her distance.

He next took out his chart, and demanded of Taylor what place it was they had just left.

"It is positively necessary," he said, as Taylor hesitated. "I must know precisely where we are."

Having located the village, and the Sprite's position on the lake, Leon turned and took the spokes of the wheel in his own sturdy grasp.

"It will be a wild race for it," he said, a little uneasily, as he turned in a few minutes to gaze again at the packet lights. "She gains rapidly. George, George!" placing his mouth to the tube.

"Aye, aye!"

"Is she carrying all the steam she can?"

"No!"

"Well, run up the steam as high as you dare, and open the valve to its fullest."

"Ay—ay," was the reply, and faithfully George obeyed Leon's orders.

The packet was a large boat; had a much longer "run," and consequently was faster than the Sprite. Besides this, they were shoving her for all she was worth, the jailer being on board, and having offered a big reward, for those times, were the prisoner recaptured.

With set features and steady hand, Leon stood at the wheel, and sought to save the Sprite, for her safety was contingent on the escape of the villainous men who had made themselves her masters.

More than once did Leon feel tempted to jam down the wheel, and bring the Sprite around and endeavor to get the protection of the packet before the villains could carry their threats into execution.

Taylor, standing beside him, seemed on one occasion to divine his thoughts, for he produced a revolver and tapped it significantly as he hoarsely said:

"Young man, I am a desperate fellow on occasions, and I will not be fooled with. At the first indication of treachery toward us, you will get the benefit of every lead pill in this thing in your addled brains."

Leon made no reply to Taylor. But a moment later he called to George to rush the steam still higher.

It was indeed a wild race—an exciting race. Little by little, as the Sprite reached the goal and the packet drew nearer and still nearer, the interest grew intense.

It was an open question—it was a toss up, head or tail—whether the Sprite reached the passage before she was overhauled by the swift-wheeled packet.

Nearer and nearer the latter drew. Half a mile away. Then only a quarter. Then an eighth. Now less and less—and less, until on board the Sprite they could hear a hail from her fore deck, while around the lips of the packet's pilot a grim smile began to play.

But of a sudden the smile vanished.

"Boat ahoy!"

"Ay—ay!" and Leon leaned from the pilot-house window.

"Bear off—bear off, or you'll be dashed to pieces on the island ahead."

"Do you think so?" and to carry out the part he was playing, Leon uttered a mocking laugh.

On—on, the islands were in sight, dimly visible in the earliest gray beams of the now not far distant day.

On—on, and Leon glanced at the chart, and then at the land ahead.

On—on; and his hand more firmly clutched the spokes. On—on, with the packet drawing up abreast. On—on, while the packet's pilot shouted to them that they must inevitably be destroyed. On—on, and then the supreme moment came.

The packet's pilot dared go no further, and his trembling hand pulled the bell; and all alone now in the race, the Sprite darted ahead into the narrow passage, and——

Gr-r-r-r-nd!

CHAPTER XVI.

IN SAFETY.

Gr-rrr-rind!

Gurr-rrr-rr!

The Sprite's headway was deadened; in fact, after a long, grinding

noise as her bottom dragged over some hidden rocks, she all but came to a standstill.

Leon's heart was in his mouth, and his eyes lacked little of containing tears, in sympathy for the hurts of the Sprite, of which he thought and spoke as if she was some living organism instead of an insensate thing, mere wood and iron, fashioned into a vessel by ingenious human hands.

One moment Leon remained in sorrowful, desponding silence, and then he cried to George:

"More steam—more yet—still more—don't be afraid of it—more yet!"

For the Sprite to have become lodged on those hidden rocks, meant falling into the hands of the packet's people, and the only way to do was to go ahead at whatever cost.

Fortunately the rocks upon which the Sprite's bottom had grounded, formed only a narrow bar at the mouth of the passage, and once over it, there was plenty of water to float a vessel of even greater draught.

"Saved!" gasped Taylor.

"Not yet," was the cool reply. "Don't let your hopes run away with your judgment, but keep cool and ready for action, should the latter become necessary. George—George!" now turning to the tube.

"Ay—ay!"

"Sound the hold and see if there is any water in it. Nothing short of a miracle is it if we have not started something."

In a minute back came a cheering answer from George Starr; as the Sprite had ground on the sunken rocks, no timbers or planks had been strained or started, so far as could be told at that time. And certain it was that no water was entering.

"The danger is past, then!" said Taylor, exultantly. "Don't croak any more, young fellow," slapping Leon on the shoulder.

"I don't wish to croak, but the danger is not yet over. There is no telling anything about this passage," Leon answered, and was turning away, when with a gasp, he pointed toward the packet.

Her small boats were being lowered, and presently fully a dozen men were rowed ashore.

Leon's cheek paled.

Somehow, unconsciously to himself, he had become an intensely interested participant in the race, and he wished, on his own account—though why, he could not have said—to get the best of the packet's crowd.

The Sprite was in a narrow passage between two islands, either of which it was almost possible to reach by springing from the hurricane deck.

Under the circumstances, Leon had thought it best to go at a very slow rate of speed, and the Sprite was not making more than five or six miles an hour, if, indeed, she made that much.

They had all taken it for granted that the packet would make all haste to go around the islands and resume the chase from the other side. But someone on board of her had been too smart for that, and the result was that a dozen men were landed.

The passage was winding and tortuous, and by cutting off the angles these men could head off the Sprite, a danger which Leon at once foresaw.

The pertinacity of the packet's people fully aroused Leon's obstinacy, and he determined to balk them at any cost.

Dangerous as it was to run at any rate of speed exceeding a few miles an hour, he called to George for more steam.

The leader of the dozen men who had come ashore from the packet was a shrewd and clear-headed fellow, and having mounted a small eminence, he took in the lay of the land and the Sprite's position.

Just sixty seconds he spent in considering, and then, in advance of his men, he laid a direct course for a point more than a mile away in a direct line, but to reach which the Sprite would have to cover nearly two miles of water.

Leon saw what the other was aiming at, and he called for still more steam.

The passage might suddenly become shallow, there might be rocks ahead, just covered by water, to strike against which while going at that rate of speed would make of the Sprite a hopeless wreck. These and other dangers might lie in their path, but Leon, with compressed lips, determined to risk them.

On through the narrow passage the Sprite went flying, while every

soul on board of her breathed heavily and at long intervals, while every nerve was strained, every muscle in a state of tension.

"More steam yet!"

Leon watched the flying men, and gauged their distance from the point, and the distance of the Sprite from the same spot.

"More steam yet!"

It was fearfully exciting—not excitement of the boisterous and noisy kind, but that deep and intense excitement which is expressed by deepest silence.

Beyond the point was a straight stretch of water, several miles in length once reaching which, the Sprite could drop, these men hopelessly in the rear.

Then whoever first reached the point would be covered with victory. On—on, until at last the result would be settled in less than another minute of time.

The pursuers were very close to the point—not more than a hundred feet away—while the Sprite was about double the distance.

Clang!

The bend was very acute, and it was necessary to slow down.

Nearer—nearer—hard down with the wheel! The Sprite's prow came around. Ease up a little! She straightened to her new course, the buckets of the wheels almost striking the bank.

"Now!" cried an encouraging voice, and the leader of the pursuing party from the packet took a short, swift run, leaped, caught at the rail, and his feet landed on the guard, aft the wheel-house.

Another of the party tried to follow; he, too, took a short and swift dash, sprang, and—splash!

He had missed it.

Another attempted the feat, and he, too, went splash!

Ting-a-ling-a-ling!

Wide open George threw the valve, and the distance from the shore so rapidly increased that still a third man of the pursuing party took an involuntary bath.

The leader, who had gained a foothold on the guard, was trying to clamber over the rail, when several of Taylor's party rushed to the spot and tossed him overboard.

Four of the packet's people were now in the water, struggling toward the shore, after reaching which, the whole party sprang in pursuit of the now fast receding Sprite.

A breath exhausting chase of ten minutes was sufficient to inform them of its uselessness, and they came to a halt, and stood watching the Sprite while they tried to recover their wind.

Had they seen the vessel brought to by any accident; had she struck a rock or grounded in any shallows, they would have pursued again. But, as no such misfortune occurred to the Sprite, and as she continued to widen the distance, the pursuers pocketed their disappointment, and made their way back to the packet, winking and blinking at the just arisen sun.

Meanwhile, the Sprite pursued her course through the passage, meeting with no impediment, and finally emerging on the opposite side of the islands into the open waters of the great lake.

And now, even though Leon had done so much for Taylor's party, they told him he must submit to being bound again and return to the fore-castle.

Leon's eyes flashed with indignation, and in his heart he began secretly to fear that Taylor, after all, meant to destroy them all, as well as the vessel, when he got through with them.

CHAPTER XVII.

A FRUITLESS SEARCH.

WITH undaunted men, Captain Roswell heard that a tug-boat filled with revenue men, had dogged the Gull, and was now in the little bay.

"What shall we do? They have caught us like rats in a trap, captain," said one scared fellow.

"They have, eh?" with a light laugh. "Much good may it do them. What, ho, there!—captain of the Gull."

"Ay—ay," replied that person, putting in an appearance.

"You have nothing contraband on board?"

"Nothing at all."

"Good! Then we will fool those fellows, sharp as they think themselves. Back into the store-room, there, with these bales and kegs—quick—waste no time—lively—lively, I say!"

When the Gull was sighted a quantity of goods had been brought from the store room, and it was concerning these that Roswell now issued these rapidly uttered orders.

It being night, those on board of the tug could see nothing of what was transpiring on the island, and by the time they landed every thing was wrapped in silence, save in the immediate vicinity of the Gull.

"Boat ahoy!" came from on board of the tug as she rounded to alongside of the sailing vessel.

"Ahoy yourself!" was the reply, in a grumbling tone.

The revenue men, lanterns in hand, climbed over the Gull's gun-wales and lightly sprang to her deck, in the full expectation of finding ample evidence before their eyes of her being engaged in the smuggling trade.

To their surprise not a vestige of such evidence was visible.

On the contrary the Gull's crew were all actively engaged, under the superintendence of the captain, in straightening out a large fish-net.

Quick-witted Captain Roswell had remembered having this in the store-room, and it had been hastily conveyed on board to perform an important part in the farce to be played.

The chief officer was lost in surprise for a moment, and then smiled in a satirical manner.

His bearing and air plainly said:

"I'm a person of superior intelligence, I am, and you can't fool me, for I see right through your little game."

"Where's the contraband stuff?" the officer presently demanded, in a tone meant to inspire with terror those who heard it.

"What contraband stuff?" innocently asked the Gull's captain, and he now smiled himself, though he turned his face away as he did so.

"Oh, stow it!" was the retort. "You know well enough what I mean, and it will be a point much against you if you do not at once make a clean breast of it."

"Clean breast of what?"

"Of your crooked business."

"Crooked business?" in a tone of well-simulated surprise. "Is fishing crooked business? By the way, however, I should like to know by what right you question me and demand an answer?"

"You know well enough."

"I don't. And I demand positive information before answering another question."

"I am a revenue officer, and here is my authority," growled the man, feeling in the bottom of his heart that he was somehow being beaten at his own game.

"Oh! ho! that's the size of it, hey? Well, I'll be only too happy to answer your questions, for this smuggling's a bad business—a bad business. What would you like to know?"

"All gammon, every bit of it," growled the officer, who was morally sure what manner of business the Gull and her captain were engaged in. "Search the vessel, boys, from cabin to fore-castle."

"I protest against it!" said the Gull's captain, quickly.

"I thought I'd fetch you," with a mocking laugh of triumph.

"I protest against it only as an honest man objects to being arrested on a false charge."

"Search her—to work at once!"

Protesting on principal, the captain in reality did all he could to facilitate a thorough search of his vessel, the result of which filled the officer with chagrin and caused him to swear vigorously.

He was thunderstruck, for he had confidently expected to find criminal articles on board of the vessel. The fact of not finding any did not convince him that his suspicions were ill-founded, he preferring to think that some trick had been played on him.

He signified his intention of remaining beside the Gull until morning, and so informed her captain.

"Very well," said the latter. "Just as you please. But you have made a great mistake."

"Why, then, do you steal around in the darkness instead of sailing by daylight?"

The Gull's captain was ready with his reply.

"I hope you will be honorable enough to keep my secret which explains my night sailing. It is, that at just this place is the best fishing spot in all Lake Michigan, and if I didn't keep it secret, it wouldn't be long afore I couldn't make my bread and butter. We are going to make a cast at daylight, and you can see for yourself."

The explanation seemed reasonable, and was borne out by all that the revenue agent saw.

Still, he was far from being satisfied.

Daylight came at last, and the Gull's crew were fishermen enough not to make any blunders that were noticeable by the officer, and, as luck had it, the haul was a very rich one.

The officer was more puzzled than he would have cared to own, and he got no clearer idea of the fraud which was being practiced upon him when he obtained a view of the island.

However to leave no stone unturned, he ordered his men ashore to search the island.

And they explored it thoroughly, but without tumbling (to use an expressive slang word) to the secret of the concealed rooms.

Vexed, out of humor, the officer swore all the way back to the tug, and on his own head not a few of his objurgations descended.

This was the case, because a glimmering of the truth had obtained lodgment in his brain, which was that he had followed the Gull too closely, and had too precipitately come down upon her.

After reaching the tug, as he paced the deck, he caught the eyes of the Gull's captain fastened on him, and he seemed to be secretly laughing at him.

"Confound you!" he hissed, in a passion. "I'll make you dance and sweat yet for all this trouble and vexation!"

"Please don't," murmured the other, and he could not quite suppress the banter in his tone. "I'm only an honest fisherman."

"Honest be hanged! I mean to keep an eye on you, and if I catch you tripping, I'll——"

"Don't, please don't!" as the officer paused.

The latter was so enraged now, that his hand flew to the butt of his revolver, and he might have attempted to use it, had not a companion laid a hand on his arm.

"Don't let your anger get the best of you," whispered this person. "I have an idea concerning this affair, which is, I think, a key to the whole business."

"And what is it?"

"Simply that this fellow found out that we were following him, and put in here to throw us off the track."

"Ha! There seems to be something in that. Then you don't believe this is where he gets loaded with contraband stuff?"

"No; in my opinion, it's further up the lake, and perhaps in the strait."

"And what shall we do?"

"Quietly bid the fellow good-day, and lay in wait for him to the north of this."

"I'll do it. Egad!—I believe we've hit the right nail on the head," and the officer's tone was now a pleasant and hopeful one.

The tug soon after steamed away, leaving the Gull at the dock.

In the early shadows of the early evening she was hastily loaded, and then took her departure, unseen by those on the tug, which was slowly cruising to and fro to the northward.

No incident worthy of recording occurred until the return of the Hawk, after having had a new bowsprit put in.

When Roswell went on board, Jack Bolen exultingly introduced him to a captive.

And that captive was——

CHAPTER XVIII.

GONE!

"A FINE way, truly, to exhibit your gratitude," said Leon, bitterly, when he had heard Taylor condemn him and George to be again bound and returned to the hold. "After having saved you—carried you safely through such perils—you reward me thus."

"It is necessary," was the calm and collected reply.

"I suppose so," said Leon, sarcastically. "There is much danger to be apprehended from two young fellows who are unarmed and widely separated. We might fall on you of a sudden and murder you all."

"Spare yourself those sarcastic speeches, for you know as well as I do that you are in our power."

Leon winced at hearing this plainly uttered and palpable truth.

At that moment he would have given ten thousand dollars for a brace of revolvers. Not one instant would he have hesitated about making use of them.

"Yes, I am in your power, and I suppose, as you speak of it, you mean to make it felt."

"I pledged you my word that neither you, your crew, nor your vessel should be injured; and my word shall be kept, in spite of your dark hints that I mean to murder you and your companions."

"But why is it that myself and Starr cannot have our liberty on our pledged words as we have just had?"

"I will answer your question fairly. You are no fool, neither am I. I know that you have noticed that our number is augmented by one man. He is a member of a band of men of whom I am the leader. We are sworn by a solemn obligation never to desert each other, and to endanger our own lives should another's be in danger. That man was caught passing counterfeit money, and he shot the officer who came to arrest him. He was tried, condemned, and would have been hung, had we not rescued him as we have. It is known that the Sprite was engaged in the affair, and you will be called on to testify, and the less you know, the better for yourself and us. We are not monsters—indeed, so far as that goes, we are grateful to you—and I swear that no harm shall befall you and yours!"

Resistance would have been useless, anyhow, and Leon and George yielded with as good a grace as possible; suffered themselves to be bound, and again descended into the forecabin, the hatch of which was immediately battened down.

Some hours later it was raised, and one of their captors descended and gave them food and drink, after which they were shut up once more in darkness.

Time passed very monotonously down there, until Dederick got a streak on him, and commenced singing Dutch dialect songs.

One of these they all knew the chorus of, and all joined in with a hearty good will.

They had no means of judging of the lapse of time, for though Leon and George had watches in their pockets, they could not get at them, on account of their hands being bound. And even could they have got at their time pieces, they could only have learned what hour it was by removing the crystal and feeling of the hands.

They had become tired of singing, and were all silent, listening to the dreary and monotonous thud, as the buckets regularly struck the water, when they heard:

Clang!

One bell—meaning slow up.

Clang!

Presently it came again, now meaning to unhook and cut off steam.

"We are about to make a landing," said Leon. "I wonder where we are?"

Just then the hatch was raised and Taylor descended, bearing food in his hands.

"There is something to eat," he said, as he placed it on the floor. "I haven't time to stop to feed you, and you'll have to do it yourselves, for I'm going ashore for a few hours and have given strict orders to those who remain not to open the hatch under any circumstances."

"Afraid of us even when bound," laughed Leon, sarcastically. "It is a compliment, indeed!"

Leon could not guess the meaning of the shrewd and peculiar smile which appeared on Taylor's face.

"One thing!" called Leon, as Taylor was ascending the steps. "You understand that we consider ourselves absolved from our pledge?"

"Yes," was his reply, contained in that single word; and then he closed the hatch, just as Leon exclaimed:

"There! the line's out, and they are just snubbing it."

There was a trampling of feet overhead a few minutes later, followed by a lengthy and very profound silence, a silence that was almost deathlike.

It must have been all of three hours from the time of landing when Leon asked if any of the others had heard even a solitary footstep during that time.

Not one of them had.

"Probably all but one or two of them went ashore," said George. "And these two are laying off and taking things coolly, thinking we are helpless in this prison of ours."

"If ve vas only free," said Dederick. "If ve vas—ve could yust go up by der deck, und mash dem zwei zuckers."

Dederick's words decided Leon to pursue a plan he had been outlining for some time previously.

"Come here, Dederick. You've got good strong teeth; see if you can't chew my bonds in two."

At once the Dutchman set to work at this novel but very difficult task.

"By Shorgel!" he muttered, as he paused to rest; "it vas vorse dan chewin' dot beefsteak."

Any one with a less strong set of teeth, or less perseverance than Dederick, could not have accomplished the task at all.

But an hour's chewing enabled Leon to snap his bonds asunder, and then drawing out his pocket knife, he speedily freed the rest.

They tried the hatch, and found it securely fastened. Next they tried the door leading to the hold, and found that it had been so barricaded that to break through it would raise a fearful racket, something which must be avoided, since, though stronger in number than the guards they expected to encounter, they were unarmed.

A board partition divided the fore-castle from the hold, and it suddenly occurred to Dederick that he knew of a board that was loose, which would afford them a means of egress.

It did so.

They passed through the aperture caused by the removal of the board, and gathered in the hold at the foot of the steps leading to the main deck.

"Single file," whispered Leon. "I will go first, and the rest of you follow in regular order, so as not to impede each other. All ready?"

"Yah."

"All got clubs?"

"I vas got a pully von!"

"One word more. They will show fight, but we must not be cowed because we have no firearms. Fight to the last gasp!"

"I'll fight longer dan dot!"

"Now!"

So exclaiming, Leon sprang up the steps, and dashed on the main deck, flourishing his club, his eyes sparkling, his face set and resolute, his whole air breathing defiance.

After him came his companions, ready and eager for the fray that was to deliver the Sprite again into their possession.

In a body they rushed along, prepared to sweep all opposition from their path. But they met with no opposition, nor did any antagonist spring to meet them and dispute the rights they were about to claim.

They made racket enough to almost wake the dead, and any one on board could not fail to have heard them. Still, nobody was to be seen.

"Sold!"

Uttering this strongly, emphasized word, Leon let fall his club.

They had gained a bloodless victory, for Taylor and his men were all gone; had all gone immediately after landing.

"What a blockhead I am!" cried Leon; "I ought to have suspected this!"

But his chagrin was overpowered by his joy in again finding himself master of the Sprite. In the pilot-house he found his revolvers and a short note of thanks from Taylor, inclosing the sum he had agreed to pay when he contracted for the Sprite, as well as a sum designed to cover the worth of the small-boat taken by them.

"This adventure beats the Dutch," mused Leon, as he pocketed the money.

It was late in the afternoon, almost dusk, but enough light still remained to show them that the villains had made a landing in a wild and lonely spot.

Here they would have remained moored all night, had not Leon feared, from the appearance of the sky, that nasty weather was not far distant; deeming it a great imprudence to be in such a situation in case a storm did occur, he at once gave orders to cast off, and before night actually fell they were out on the lake.

About ten o'clock, George called Leon, once, twice, thrice, but received no reply. Calling to Dederick, he ordered him to go to the pilot-house.

"He vas not here, und de veel vas in stay ropes," called Dederick, presently.

Alarmed not a little, George caused a hasty search to be made, but Leon was not to be found. Not a nook or corner but was examined, and they knew for a fact that Leon was gone!

But where? How? When?

On every side the water stretched away for miles, and Taylor had taken the small boat! And Leon could not fly!

His disappearance was an unsolvable mystery to George and the deck hands.

CHAPTER XIX.

LEON'S DISAPPEARANCE EXPLAINED.

"SEARCH the vessel again!"

So ordered George Starr, and once more the Sprite was searched from stem to stern—from hold to hurricane deck. Not a nook or cranny large enough to hold a cat but was examined carefully.

But nothing could be found of Leon; nor could they learn anything concerning the manner and causes of his disappearance. There was absolutely no clew.

George was more puzzled than he had ever been before in the course of his life.

It was not possible that another vessel could have approached the Sprite and Leon been captured and carried away in her. Nor was it possible for Leon to fly away. As Taylor's party had taken their only small boat, Leon could not have left the Sprite in that.

A worse puzzled or more confounded party than that on board of the Sprite it would have been hard to find.

What to do George did not know. He had stopped the engines some minutes before, and the vessel was now motionless, save for the little way the wind and current gave her.

After thinking and pondering and cudgeling his brains, George reached the conclusion that the only solution could be that Leon had accidentally fallen overboard.

But, in that case, he would have cried for help; and if he had, someone would surely have heard him.

At this reflection, George uttered a disgusted exclamation:

"I won't try to reason any more on the thing. I can find no satisfactory solution, and the thing is driving me crazy!"

With which words, he commenced pacing to and fro.

And what was the secret of Leon's disappearance?

Simple enough it was, when the explanation is given.

Standing there in the pilot-house, his eyes directed ahead, and sweeping the surface of the lake, his attention had been riveted by a dark object.

Earnestly he had scanned it, and then turning to the tube, he called George, intending to have him tell Dederick to go on the fore-deck and examine this dark object as they reached it. But George was either busy and did not hear, or was outside of the engine-room for a moment, for he made no reply.

After having listened, and hearing no answer from George, Leon gazed again at the object, which was now considerably nearer. And it struck him that it was a drifting small boat.

Hastily guying fast the wheel, he stepped from the pilot-house, and went to the very edge of the upper deck.

Nearer and nearer—and then he saw of a surety that it was a small boat.

There was a boat-hook near by, and with this he determined to secure and catch the strayed and drifting little craft.

As he was turning away to go for the hook, he caught his toe on a projection, was thrown off his balance, and the next moment plunged headlong into the lake.

When he came to the surface he called loudly for help, but his cries were drowned in the din of the paddles, and the Sprite swept on, leaving him to his fate.

Loudly and frequently he yelled for help, and continued so to do until the vessel had receded to such a distance that her lights twinkled, and disappeared suddenly.

Further cries were useless. This fact was only too palpable, and Leon finally desisted.

Up to this time he had contented himself with paddling water to keep himself afloat. Now, satisfied that he had nothing to hope for from the Sprite, he turned his attention to the means of preserving his life.

First of all he divested himself of his shoes, that he might be able to swim more easily.

Then, springing as high out of the water as possible, he glanced swiftly about in quest of the small boat, which had been the indirect cause of his present predicament.

At length he saw it.

At once he struck out manfully toward the boat, reaching it after a hard and lengthy struggle.

"To his surprise, he found it to be the small boat belonging to the Sprite—the one taken away by Taylor's party.

This fact was almost as much of a puzzle to Leon as his disappearance was to George and the rest of the Sprite's crew.

Of the small boat's two oars, one was broken and the other missing, and the boat itself was nearly half filled with water.

Leon bent his head in his hand, and after a few moments' musing, muttered:

"I can hardly believe that they all trusted themselves on the lake in this boat. And there has been no sufficiently rough weather to swamp them. Can it be that this is a ruse to mislead pursuit?"

Indeed, Leon afterward learned that this was the case. Taylor had broken one oar, thrown the other away, half filled the small boat with water, and sent her adrift, while he and his companions started on foot across country.

In the locker or cuddy in the stern was a bailer, and procuring this, Leon soon freed the boat of water.

Then, with the painter, he spliced the broken oar, and on it rigged his blue flannel shirt as a sail, while he steered her with a bit of board belonging to her sheathing.

Hopefully he laid his course in the direction taken by the Sprite.

He thought that as soon as his absence was noticed, George would cause the vessel to retrace her course, in case which was done, he would be on board again before very long.

He did not misjudge George, for the latter sent Dederick to the pilot-house, and the Sprite was soon moving slowly in a reverse direction, while a sharp lookout was kept for Leon, although none dreamed for an instant that he would be found.

Still, he would have been found had Dederick been as good a pilot as he was an honest fellow.

Dederick was not practiced enough to keep directly in the track, and they failed to see Leon or hear his cries, although he saw the Sprite's lights, and heard the roar of the wheels. They were fully a mile apart, Dederick having been unable to keep her closer to the track.

Leon was in despair at first, but quickly recovering, he attempted to devise some plan whereby to attract the attention of the Sprite's people.

First of all, he thought of some matches. If he struck and burned these in rapid succession, they might be observed. But he found them water soaked and useless. He then took the piece of board he had been steering with and struck its flat side on the water, producing a heavy report, which was not heard on board the Sprite, because she was enveloped in an atmosphere of noise of her own making.

On a calm, still night, such a noise as Leon made by slapping the water can be heard for two or three miles.

"Well," mused Leon, as he watched the Sprite's lights recede until they were on the point of fading entirely from sight; "well, there's no use crying over spilled milk. I'm not as badly off as I might be, not by a good deal. I've got this small boat, and know her to be a good and seaworthy one; she will carry me safely ashore, if handled properly, and I can join the Sprite when she reaches Milwaukee."

Having so decided, Leon ceased longer to allow himself to regret having missed the Sprite, and instead proceeded to occupy his mind in connection with the best and safest course to follow.

He glanced earnestly, more than once, up at the sky.

At sunset he had felt sure that a storm was not far distant, and, indeed, the sky had been very threatening in appearance.

But it was less so now, and Leon hoped for the best as he brought the little craft's prow about to her new course, and then was hurried along by the swelling sail made of a shirt.

The sun was rising, when Leon discerned a sail at some distance, standing on a course which, should their respective rates of speed remain the same, must bring them within speaking distance of each other.

Leon might have avoided the meeting, but saw no occasion for so doing. Indeed, something might be gained by going on board the vessel, instead of remaining in his little cockle-shell of a craft.

This vessel which was approaching was a smuggler, although Leon did not guess it. The small boat was seen, and was scrutinized long and carefully through a powerful glass in the hands of Jack Bolen. There was more than usual interest manifested in the scrutiny he bestowed on the face of the small boat's occupant.

"As I live," he chuckled, "here's a stroke of good fortune; it's the lad the cap'en wants to get hold of, Leon Leroy, the pilot of the Sprite!"

Nor was he mistaken, as the reader is well aware.

Bolen kept out of sight while the second mate invited Leon on board. He accepted the invitation, but had no sooner reached the deck than he knew that he was a prisoner, for he recognized grinning Jack Bolen as he stepped forward and extended his hand.

Leon drew haughtily back.

"I know you, fellow," he said.

"Ah! you do, hey? Delighted to see me, of course?"

"I'd be more delighted to see you where you belong—at the end of a rope."

Jack Bolen laughed harshly, but not with any ill will. He was too well pleased, for he knew how happy the captain would be made by Leon's capture.

So Leon's bitter speech drew down on his head no angry resentment, and he was treated kindly and allowed much apparent freedom, though he was closely watched and knew that instant death would have been the penalty of an attempt at escape.

And at last he and Captain Roswell were brought face to face. Sternly and long they eyed each other, with bated breath and agitated hearts, but uttering no word.

CHAPTER XX.

ON THE ISLAND.

LEON LEROY could not fail to perceive a certain grandeur and strength in the herculean and proudly-carried form of Captain Roswell. The steady gaze of the latter Leon returned as steadily, but in spite of himself a chill crept into his heart as he did so.

This, however, he managed to conceal from Roswell, toward whom he kept an undaunted front.

At length a smile crossed the face of the smuggler captain. He was more than pleased with Leon's bold and almost defiant carriage.

Very few words were uttered before Roswell signed for Jack Bolen to follow him, bringing along the prisoner.

Leon was taken into the cave, and was motioned to a seat in a room adjoining that usually occupied by May.

At a sign, Roswell and Leon were left alone.

For fully two minutes Roswell stared at Leon in a thoughtful manner, a far-away expression in his eyes, and then his head dropped forward until his chin rested on his breast, apparently oblivious of Leon's presence.

It was some few minutes ere the silence was broken, and then Leon spoke, and recalled Roswell from his reverie.

"Sir, I demand of you an explanation of your conduct."

Roswell started visibly at the sound of Leon's voice, as if he had suddenly heard a tone that was an echo of one known in the distant past.

"You will have an explanation given you in due season," said Roswell, calmly. "Meanwhile, make yourself as comfortable as circumstances will permit."

"And you intend keeping me in ignorance of your intentions?"

"For the present, I do. I had thought to tell you now, but having considered, will defer it until after I have made a trip to——"

"To where?"

"Canada," said Roswell, smiling.

"Canada! You are a smuggler then, as well as a pirate. Heaven grant that you may not be—as I fear you are—kith or kin of mine."

Roswell scowled darkly.

"You insult me!" he exclaimed.

"I'm sorry if I do, but I speak the truth. I don't like you and your dark ways, and I say so, frankly."

"Careful!"

"Be careful yourself," retorted Leon, "or some day you may find the hangman's noose about your neck."

Captain Roswell's face grew livid with rage; he clenched his hands, and for a brief moment, seemed on the point of striking the youth who bearded him so harshly and boldly.

Then he controlled himself by an effort, and in a hoarse voice said:

"Young man, be careful. Do not anger me again, or the consequences may be fatal to yourself. You have been warned—now do as you think best."

Brave as was Leon Leroy, his heart quailed, and he shrank a little from this man, so terrible looking in his anger, with the veins standing out like knotted cords on his forehead.

Leon was not cowed, however.

He merely saw that the wisest course to pursue was one of silence.

Besides, his cause would not be bettered by exasperating this man, in whose hands his fate rested.

For nearly ten minutes Captain Roswell paced to and fro, and then pausing before Leon, the latter saw that the anger had died from his face.

"Leon," and the tone was almost affectionate—"Leon, the mystery will soon be explained, in a few days at latest. I am going away, and I want your pledge to remain quietly here during my absence."

"Force alone can keep me here," said Leon, haughtily.

"Then force will be employed!" and the smuggler captain smiled grimly. "Leon, I mean you no harm unless you try to thwart me. In that case"—and his eyes glittered—"I would myself slay you without compunction."

Leon made no reply, only stood there gazing calmly at the man who threatened his life.

"Will you not pledge me your word to make no attempt at escape during my absence?"

"I will not."

"Not to save yourself from imprisonment and a diet of bread and water?"

"No."

Again Roswell paced to and fro.

"Listen!" he said, when he paused again. "I do not wish to do you injury or cause you any inconvenience, or make you my enemy. As you will not give me your pledged word, I must place a guard over you who will not allow you to escape. But you had best give me your word."

"And would you take it?"

"I would."

"Why? I am stranger to you. You would not take everybody's word?"

"No."

"Then why take mine?"

"Because I know the blood that flows in your veins, and know that none of the race ever dishonored his word!" and Roswell's cheeks flushed a little, as if with pride.

"Then you knew my father and mother?"

"I did."

"Will you not tell me of them?"

"In due time—in due time. But your word—will you give it?"

"I will not!"

With a sigh Roswell turned away, and having called in Jack Bolen gave orders to prepare at once to sail.

"As you go out send in Ben," said Roswell, in conclusion.

A few minutes later Ben entered.

"What is it, cap'n?"

"I am going to leave this young man in your charge while I am gone. You must see to it that he does not escape. Treat him kindly and let him have as much liberty as you can in safety, but in case he attempts to escape, kill him before letting him get away."

Ben grinned.

"I understand, cap'n."

"I'm glad you do. One thing more, be very careful that he gets no

opportunity to make any signals to any vessels which may chance to pass."

"I'll remember."

"I shall hold you responsible," warned Captain Roswell.

"He'll be here when you get back," was the confident reply of Ben. Captain Roswell bowed stiffly to Leon, and walked from the apartment, leaving Ben and the youth to become better acquainted.

Leon passed the night in a small chamber with a heavy door, from which it would be impossible to break.

In the morning he was released and given his breakfast out doors, just before the entrance to the subterranean apartments.

Feeling disposed for a walk after having eaten his breakfast, he started off. Ben followed him at a distance of a few paces.

Pausing to look back, an expression of admiration came into Leon's face, produced by scrutinizing the cunningly-built and concealed rooms, which had defied their scrutiny when he was on that island voluntarily instead of as a prisoner.

Walking along at the very edge of the water, some time later in the day, he suddenly came upon a person as he turned the corner of a jutting rock.

It was May, sitting on a boulder.

She started up with a cry of alarm, that was followed by a rosy flush of the cheeks.

Leon recoiled, then bent forward and keenly eyed her, hastily advanced and—May quickly laid a finger on her lips as he was about to speak.

"The fair unknown who brought me a warning!" was the exclamation which May's action cut short.

Then she drew herself haughtily up, and her face took on a freezing expression, as she said:

"Ben, what is the meaning of this? Has not my uncle strictly ordered that none shall step foot on this part of the island except myself?"

"The captain did order so, I know, but he told me not to restrict this young man as long as he did not seek to escape, and as he strayed here, I followed."

"Well, no more excuses!" in a half angry tone. "Be off with you now, and take care that it does not occur again."

"But—" urged Leon.

"No 'buts' about it. Go, I say!" with a stamp of the foot.

"Come on!" said Ben, gruffly. "She's a Tartar sometimes," in an undertone to Leon, who turned and left the ground sacred to her feet.

Leon was left in a quandary.

Surely it was friendly in her to come and warn him, but she could hardly be said to have seemed friendly now.

But perhaps all her asperity was put on—was a sham—a blind for the benefit of Ben.

He began to hope so, and from hoping got to believing that it was true.

Shortly after midnight he was awakened by a low calling of his name.

His heart leaped into his throat.

"It is the sweet unknown!" he murmured. "She has come to help me escape!"

CHAPTER XXI.

UNDER ARREST.

GEORGE STARR was inconsolable for the loss of Leon.

He would not have felt so badly had he known precisely what had happened to Leon. It was to be presumed that he had fallen overboard, and was dead ere this. Assured of his death, George would have grieved less than he did.

What was the most horrible to George was the reflection that there was a possibility that Leon might be in the lake alive yet, struggling to keep his head above water, his mind a prey to all the horrors of such an occasion.

Leon was known to be an excellent swimmer, and would find no difficulty in keeping afloat as long as his strength held out.

After having retraced their course, the Sprite was again brought about and went over it in the original direction.

Then they tacked about in the neighborhood where he was supposed to have been lost, but, of course, without discovering aught of him.

It was then that George mournfully said:

"It's no use, boys! Let us now return home to Milwaukee."

Thitherward the Sprite's prow was turned, but the little vessel did not dance over the lake as gayly as usual.

George's heart was so heavy that he took no care to keep up a good head of steam, and the Sprite, as if in sympathy with her engineer, seemed to lag and do less with the same amount of steam that, when Leon was at the wheel, would have accomplished so much more.

Ten miles from Milwaukee Dederick observed a large propeller of the tug style, heading up the lake.

Those on board the tug seemed finally to sight the Sprite, for at once her course was changed.

"Dey wants to speak mit us," said Dederick. "Vell, I vas villin', but I ain't a-goin' to shange de course straight for Milwaukee."

Nor did he.

While he saw no reason for avoiding the tug, he had no particular desire to speak to her captain.

A short while later, Dederick gave a sudden start, then bent over the window-frame and gazed fixedly at the tug.

Then he drew back, took up a pair of powerful glasses, and through them scanned the approaching craft.

"Shorge!" he called through the tube.

"Ay—ay?" came back.

"Dere vas a tug-boat a-comin' up mit us, und she vas——"

"Well—what was she?"

"Mit her bows von her dere vas a pig gannon."

"A what?"

"A pig gannon! Don'd you vas forstay? Bedder lookin' for yourself."

George Starr went to the gangway, and by the naked eye, so near had the strange craft approached, he could see that on a fore-deck, built for the purpose, she carried a mounted cannon.

George's recent experience made him shy of strangers, and, not knowing the tug's character, he determined to give her a wide berth.

"Dederick!" he called up.

"Vell?"

"Give the tug a wide berth. Slip past her if you can."

"I don'd know if id could pe done."

"Try it."

"All righd. I bade me dot if vonce ve got her behind us, she don'd von'd cotch us."

Aroused from his grief at loss of Leon by this new exigency, George began to fire up strong.

He opened the throttle wider, and the Sprite mended her pace.

Dederick was a good enough helmsman for the occasion, and having changed the Sprite's course a little, he saw that he stood a good show of carrying her across the tug's bow before the point of intersection was gained.

From the stir that took place on board of the tug, it was evident that this change of course was not relished.

When it became certain a few minutes later, that the Sprite was good for the task cut out for her, there was a commotion on the tug's fore-deck, and then——

Boom!

A puff of smoke, a loud report, and a cannon ball plunged into the water near them.

"Should I keep on?" inquired Dederick.

"Yes."

Boom!

But the Sprite kept calmly on, nor deigned to notice the shots.

Black smoke now rolled from the tug's smokestack, as her fireman forced her fires.

But George was forcing also, and soon the Sprite passed the most dangerous and closest point, and then the distance between tug and steamboat began to increase.

Boom!

George caught his breath.

For a moment he held it, and then breathed a sigh of relief.

They had not been hit.

"Will we escape, Dederick?" he called up the tube, and back came such a reply as only Dederick could make.

"I dinks me dot it vas likely, more or less, perhabs."

Hardly had he ceased speaking, however, before they learned to the contrary.

Crash-sh-sh-sh!

Then came the heavy "boom!" the ball having reached the Sprite before the report.

Hiss-s-s-s!

The engine stopped, for one of the eccentric arms had been broken by the cannon ball, and the hiss was caused by the steam rushing into one end of the cylinder, and escaping through the open exhaust port.

With a cry of despair, George sprang forward, and cut off steam, and then awaited the tug's coming.

Soon she was brought alongside with a slight jar, and then half a dozen men sprang on board.

"In the name of the law I declare you to be prisoners and demand your surrender," said the leader, and at a sign from him another stepped forward to handcuff George.

CHAPTER XXII.

A MESSAGE FROM LEON.

WHEN the officer would have put the handcuffs on him, George retreated a few paces.

"Halt!" sternly ordered the officer in charge of the party.

George obeyed.

"Hold out your hand!" commanded the deputy.

"Sir," and George appealed to the commanding officer, "where does the necessity come in for my being subjected to such an indignity?"

"It's the safest way, that's all."

"But we are at your mercy."

"You made such a desperate attempt to get away, that it seems best to cage you."

"If you had gone through what we have, you'd have given an unknown craft, carrying a cannon, a wide berth."

The officer stared at George a minute and then winked profoundly laughed, and said:

"Trying the innocent dodge, eh? Well, since you object to being handcuffed, we won't put 'em on you, particularly as your craft is disabled and you can't possibly use her to give us the slip."

"Thank you," said George.

"You're welcome," returned the officer. "And now, have you got on board anything good in the way of liquids? I'd like just one snootful."

It chanced that Mr. Starr had insisted on the lads taking on board some prime old rye whisky in case of sickness occurring.

A good square drink of this mellowed the officer and made him quite friendly with George.

"I'll take charge of you myself," he told George. "Of course you will consider yourself a prisoner, but as long as you keep close to me you will not be otherwise guarded."

George saw that it would be wisest to do this, and he accompanied the officer, and heard him give orders for the tug to fasten on and tow the disabled Sprite to Milwaukee.

The latter place was not many miles away, and it wanted quite considerable of the hour of noon when the tug and the Sprite slowly approached Milwaukee's wharves.

George's eyes opened with astonishment as he saw the visible excitement produced by his little steamboat's return in custody.

The dock was crammed, jammed full of people when the Sprite was laid alongside the stringpiece.

A buzz ran through the assemblage as George was sighted, standing there proudly calm in the knowledge of his innocence of anything wrong.

The first person to spring aboard was Mr. Starr. The officer angrily ordered him off, but ceased his growling when informed that it was George's father.

"You are innocent, George!" exclaimed Mr. Starr, grasping

son's hand. "I know you are, and still I should like to hear you say so. And Leon?"

"Innocent of what?"

"The charge against you."

"And what is that?"

"Of complicity in a murder, and of breaking a jail and helping a condemned murderer to escape."

"I am innocent."

"And Leon?"

"Is dead," answered George, in a rasping, harsh, but very low tone.

"Dead?" starting back aghast.

"Yes."

"How did he die, and when?"

As briefly as possible he outlined the circumstances attending Leon's disappearance, which the officer was gracious enough to permit him to finish.

Then George and Dederick and the new deck hand were ordered to accompany him before a magistrate.

Here they were all charged with the crimes spoken of by Mr. Starr, and stood committed for trial in default of bail.

This Mr. Starr was able to furnish to any amount necessary, and the trio were liberated at once.

Now that the excitement incident to his arrest was over, George became more blue than ever over the loss of Leon.

But somehow Mr. Starr did not believe that Leon was dead.

Again and again he had his son recount the story of that night, making him dwell at length on every circumstance.

Mr. Starr was not of a foolishly sanguine nature, but what George told him could not convince him of Leon's death.

"He still lives," said the gentleman, positively. "I feel sure of it!"

George became infected with his father's belief, and it was an excellent thing, for, with this hope in his heart, he was able to take an interest in matters which he could not have otherwise done.

One of the first things to do was to have mended the broken eccentric of the Sprite's engine.

It was the very day of the completion of the repairs, that an accident occurred which was the cause of considerable excitement in the residence of the Starrs.

The evening meal was just over, and the family were gathered in the sitting-room, when, after the door bell had rung, the servant announced:

"Captain Jenkins."

"Jenkins?" repeated Mr. Starr. "Jenkins? I know of nobody of that name. You are sure he asked for me?"

"Yis, sor!"

"Do you, George, know of anyone of the name?" turning to his son.

"No, sir."

"You showed him into the parlor?" to the girl.

"I did, sor."

"Very well; I will go and see him," and Mr. Starr proceeded to the parlor to meet his unknown visitor.

"Mr. Starr, I suppose?" said Captain Jenkins, arising as the gentleman entered.

"I am Mr. Starr."

"Mr. James Starr?"

"Yes, sir," was the polite reply, as Mr. Starr took in the rough sailor appearance and attire of his visitor.

"I am particular because I have for you a message, which came into my hands in a very strange way.

"I am captain of the market schooner Polly, running into Chicago. Yesterday, some miles up the lake, one of my hands drew my attention to what appeared to be a little toy sailboat adrift.

"It happened to strike me to pick it up for my little boy at home, and the Polly was brought a little to port, and as we brushed by it, I captured the thing with a boat hook.

"Tied to the base of what answered as a mast were two water-soaked notes. The one addressed to 'WHOEVER FINDS THIS' I opened, and it read thus:

"For the love of Heaven, deliver the other note which accompanies this, to Mr. James Starr, Milwaukee. It is a matter of life and death!"

"The note made such an impression on me, that I have turned aside from my course to bring here the one addressed to you."

"You have it here?"

"Yes, here it is;" and Captain Jenkins passed to Mr. Starr the water-soiled and shrunken and wrinkled note, which bore his name and address as a superscription.

A single glance at the writing, and then he exclaimed:

"It is from Leon!"

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE INTERVIEW.

LEON LEROY was greatly excited when he heard the low knocking and the mention of his name, on being awakened near the midnight hour.

"It is the beautiful unknown come to help me to escape," he told himself, and his heart began to beat faster and faster.

"Leon Leroy!" was called again, and the sweetness and music of the tone left no doubt it belonged to May Meredith.

"Ay—ay!" he lowly replied.

"You do not blame me for my manner and words to-day?"

"No—no—I guessed the reason."

"I am glad of that, for it must not be suspected that we are friendly."

"But you are my friend?"

"I am."

"And are you going to help me escape?"

"No."

"What! My friend, and not help me escape the clutches of the stern-faced demon who seems to be master here?"

"Hush! You must not speak so of Captain Roswell. He is human as well as yourself. But I only came to assure you of my friendship. Good-by!"

"No—no! do not go yet!"

"It is dangerous to be talking here. It is risky for both of us."

"But I want to talk to you."

"Do you?" and Leon thought he detected a pleased ring in her voice.

"Yes. Can we not meet and talk freely with each other?"

"There is only one way."

"And that?"

"To pledge Ben your word to make no attempt at escape. Give him your pledge for one day, and then meet me where we met to-day."

"But will he accept my word?"

"He has been instructed to do so, and is absolved from all responsibility in case you make your escape by breaking your word."

Leon was silent for a little.

It galled him dreadfully to even think of giving a pledge, but he desired to see and speak more freely to the beautiful unknown, and finally he said:

"I will be there."

"Very well. Good-night."

"Good-night!" Leon returned, and then he heard her light foot-falls as they retreated, growing more and more faint until they were lost in the distance.

With a woman's ready wit, May smoothed the way to the giving of the pledge the next morning, by suggesting to Ben that perhaps Leon might give it.

Acting on the suggestion, Ben broached the subject, and Leon, after a little hesitancy so as not to arouse any suspicion, gave him a pledge for that day only.

About the middle of the forenoon, Leon approached the rendezvous.

May was there, waiting for him.

Leon's eyes brightened, his cheeks flushed with pleasure, and he thought he had never before gazed upon so lovely a creature.

Leon's mind had been full of questions, but they were all driven completely from his mind now.

He spent nearly two hours in May's company, and only learned one thing—that her name was May.

He had intended asking her about the island, about Roswell, and whether she knew why he was kept a prisoner there. But not a question did he ask.

Gladly would he have passed the entire day with her, but May said him "nay!"

"It would not be safe for you to be too long out of sight, and the fact that you and I are both absent in this direction at once, might cause us to be suspected."

"Suppose they do suspect us—what then?"

May made no answer to this question, only smiled knowingly.

"It is already noon. I must go. Good-bye."

"But—May——"

Leon paused, taken aback at the sound of his own voice, filled with ardor and admiration. May's glance was filled with anything but hatred, and there is no telling what tender love-passages might have followed, had not May been alarmed, and fled at the sound of an approaching footstep.

It was Ben, in search of Leon, whom he found casting pebbles into the water in a dreamy manner, the whole scene being so artfully acted as to fool Ben completely.

The next day Leon refused to pledge his word, having struck a plan which gave promise of escape.

This was the setting adrift of a roughly shaped little boat, cut with a jack knife from a block of pine wood in the leisure moments of one of the men who lived permanently on the island.

Leon had noticed it lying around, and possessed himself of it without arousing Ben's suspicions. He next rigged sails on it, and during the day managed to set it adrift with two notes on it, without its being discovered by his guard.

It was the only thing he could do toward effecting an escape, and feeling assured of this, he gave Ben a pledge the following morning.

At about the hour he and May had met before he laid his course toward the jutting rocks.

His heart was bounding strangely within him, and Leon finally asked of himself:

"Is this love?"

Never before had any of the opposite sex affected him in the same way as May, and he made up his mind that when he saw her he would adopt a course of vigorous wooing.

Leon was deeply disappointed at not finding May there, but sat himself down in hopes of her coming.

And as he sat there he fell to dreaming of her—of her eyes so beautiful, of her silken hair, of her sweet face, of her graceful carriage—and thus he, who had never written a line of poetry in his life, began to scribble sonnets to May, likening her eyes to stars—lamps of Heaven, he called them—likening her cheeks to roses, her teeth to pearls.

Most young men get into a similar state at some period in their lives.

While wrapped up in this occupation, May approached him unheard and unnoticed.

He knew nothing of her presence until he felt a pair of warm lips imprinting a kiss on his forehead.

Leon's dream was shattered.

That kiss, which should have delighted him, had the contrary effect. Had he been compelled to beg for this mark of her favor—had he obtained it after a struggle, it would probably have been appreciated.

But for her to so quickly give in—to so quickly acknowledge her affection—it was disgusting.

He had dreamed of throwing his arms about her, and kissing her ripe, pouting lips. But now his arms hung listlessly at his sides, and had it not been for one thing, he might have turned and left her.

The only thing that kept him at all was the reflection that she might have in her possession, and be willing to communicate, the mystery surrounding his life.

But would she do so?

CHAPTER XXIV.

"YOU MUST SLAY THAT MAN!"

MAY seemed to catch the impression left on Leon's mind by her kissing him, and at first an amused expression came into her face.

This, however, was followed by one that was grave, and she sat down beside him in a quiet manner, and did not venture to speak until he addressed her.

"May," he finally said, "are you any relation to this man, Roswell?"

"I am."

"What?"

"His niece."

"Do you know yourself to be so?"

"Only from what he has told me," was the reply. "But why do you ask these questions?"

"Because I wish them answered," he rather impolitely returned, for after having glanced into her face, he felt himself again becoming bewitched, and was angry with himself.

"I beg your pardon," after the awkward silence which succeeded his previous speech. "I did not mean to be rude;" and looking earnestly at her, he thought to himself; "why should I blame her for so innocent an action. She, probably has always lived here, has never been in society, and knows nothing of its rules. No, I'll not blame her."

"You are pardoned," May smilingly said.

"Thank you. I am glad that you are still to be my friend. And now, May, can you, will you, answer me this question: '*Am I any relation to this man?*'"

Leon had moved closer to May, had unconsciously taken her hand, and as her surprised face was turned toward him, he kissed her.

"Why, I thought uncle had said something to you of yourself?"

"He has not, though."

A merry peal of laughter rippled from May's lips, and she at once drew herself away from Leon.

"I thought he had. No wonder——"

Again May laughed, as some comical view of the situation crossed her mind.

"And will you answer me?" asked Leon, in a vexed tone, when she had sobered down a little.

"I cannot," she gravely answered. "That I do know something of the mystery of your life, I shall not deny, but it is forbidden me to speak of it to you."

"By whom?—by that villain?"

"Meaning Captain Roswell, I suppose? In that case it would be as well to speak of him in a proper manner."

"Again I beg pardon. But, May, I entreat you——"

"That is close enough, if you please. We can hear each other very well at this distance," she interrupted, in a calm and self-possessed tone.

Leon was now the victim of another revulsion of feeling.

The more cold and distant she was, the more deeply in love he felt himself, and he panted in his eagerness to take her into his arms and kiss her.

But May now kept him at a distance, her language always gentle but firm.

"And you will not tell me what I wish to know?" he asked, despairingly.

"I cannot."

"Yet you love me!"

"Did I ever tell you so?" and there was a mischievous twinkle in her eyes.

"No, but you kissed me."

"Did I? I beg your pardon, I'm sorry for it," she tantalizingly said.

Again and again he entreated her to tell him what she knew; but she remained inflexible, and when she thought it proper to bring the interview to a close she arose calmly to depart.

"I must go now, so good-bye."

"Don't go yet."

"It is necessary."

"But you are not angry with me? You are still my friend? You

still think as much of me as before we met this morning?" he earnestly said.

"Yes."

"You are not mocking me?"

"No. And this is the earnest that I mean what I say," and she calmly raised her lips to be kissed.

Leon would have supplemented his salute with a hug, but she would not permit this, and took her leave hastily.

He did not see her again that day, nor the next. On that following, he caught just a glimpse of her, and she smiled on him in such a benign way that Leon bit his lip with anger.

"She is younger than I am by several years, and yet she treats me in a patronizing, condescending manner, as if she were far wiser than I and pitied my ignorance," he muttered.

That night the Hawk ran in to the island, and unloaded.

Leon knew that the vessel was there, although he was locked up, for he could hear the bustle produced by carrying the contraband goods into the store-house.

Would Roswell visit him?

This self-asked question was answered just before daybreak, when the stern-faced man entered Leon's prison.

"I see you are awake," he said, as Leon arose from his couch. "It is well. You will get ready to accompany me."

"Where to?" asked Leon.

"To Canada."

"For what purpose?"

"Revenge!"

Hissing this word, a great change took place in the appearance of Captain Roswell. His face writhed with black passion, his eyes glared like those of a vindictive tiger, his teeth ground together, his hands were clenched until the muscles swelled into big lumps.

The passion within him was like the immense mass of molten lava in some volcano, having no outlet, and which is surging and seething, angry beneath the restraint imposed on it, and which one day would burst as bounds with a terrible and destructive fury.

As yet the lava of his passion was held in check by an iron will. But some day, in an unguarded moment, or when that will was sleeping, it would burst forth, and then—*beware of him!*

"Revenge for what?" said Leon, presently. "It is my right to know, and I demand of you the explanation of all this mystery."

"Three days hence you shall know all," he moodily answered.

"I demand the knowledge now, before I take a single step in your company," said Leon, firmly.

"Hark ye, my lad—you've got to go, knowledge or no knowledge! So you may as well yield gracefully."

There was no gainsaying that he was completely in this man's power.

But he did not want to go.

If he could only stay here on the island for a day or two! Perhaps in even less time, his notes that were sent adrift, would bring rescue for him.

Leon was compelled to yield, however, and just ere daybreak, the Hawk sailed out of the little bay, and he was on board of her, in a character 'twixt that of passenger and prisoner.

It is needless to relate the occurrences of the trip up the lake, or the long land journey that followed, in which Roswell, Jack Bolen and Leon were the only participants.

And then Leon learned the meaning of the trouble taken to capture him, of the cause of this long journey.

In the streets of a Canadian town, Roswell drew Leon's attention to a man who was passing.

"Do you see that man?"

"Yes."

"Note him well," and Roswell's tones quivered with passion. "You would know him again?"

"Yes."

"You must slay that man!"

Leon recoiled, gasping for breath. Slay that man? Commit murder? He, Leon Leroy, redden his hands with the life-blood of a human being?

"You must slay him, or I will slay you as a craven unworthy of the blood in your veins, unworthy of the family from which you spring!"

CHAPTER XXV.

A FAMILY HISTORY.

THE man toward whom Captain Roswell had directed Leon's attention finally disappeared, was gone a few minutes, and then reappeared, going in an opposite direction to that when first seen.

So horrified had Leon been by Roswell's stern and vindictive words, that he had been actually unable to move. So they were still there when the man passed again, still on the opposite side of the street.

By chance, the gentleman's eyes were turned in the direction of the little party, and as his gaze rested on Roswell, he gave a start.

Roswell turned quickly away, breathing very hard, his eyes gleaming.

The gentleman paused for possibly a second or two, and then calmly went his way.

"He was startled at first!" muttered Roswell. "But he is now laughing at his fears, for he believes me dead."

Leon looked curiously at Roswell.

"Come!" said the latter, and they went up the street at a rapid pace.

When they reached a hotel, Roswell called Leon and took him to a private room.

"I will now clear up the mystery of your life," he said, after locking the door to make them secure against intrusion.

Leon was, of course, deeply interested, and filled with a deep but quiet excitement.

Roswell commenced pacing the floor, his arms folded, his brows contracted, as if arranging the details of the life-history he was about to relate.

So long did he continue to pace to and fro, that Leon grew impatient.

"Well, sir, I am waiting," he at last said.

But Captain Roswell paid no heed to the words, nor gave him any attention until he was ready to do so.

At last, however, he seated himself close to Leon, and cleared his throat.

"Leon Leroy," he said, and his voice was very strained and husky, "Leon Leroy, do you guess the relationship that exists between us?"

Although Leon had thought it possible that he and Roswell were related, he had hoped that it was not so, until he had come to believe it impossible.

Consequently he was staggered for a moment, and then, going to the other extreme, he gasped:

"Can it be that you are my father?"

"No."

Leon breathed deeply with relief.

"I am your uncle."

"My uncle? Then——"

Leon paused suddenly. He was going to speak of May, when it occurred to him that it would be wisest to be silent, as Roswell knew nothing of his having had any interviews with her.

"Then what?" said Roswell.

"Nothing. Go on."

"I will do so," he returned, presently. "I need not ask you to pay close attention, for the story will demand that of you."

"Twenty-two years ago Leon Magruder married Lucy Leroy, sister to the man I pointed out to you."

"The Magruders were an old Scotch family, allied by blood to the last of the royal Scottish family."

"The Leroy's were English, and stood high in office here in this British colony, or province."

"Leon Magruder was a poor man, the Leroy's were rich."

"Leon Magruder saw Lucy Leroy, fell in love with her, and they became engaged to be married."

"Her father opposed the marriage of his daughter to a poor Magruder, but not more strongly than I opposed the marriage of a blue-blooded Magruder to one in whose veins ran the most plebeian of red blood."

"In spite of opposition on all sides, Leon and Lucy were married, and in course of time two children were born to them."

"Lucy's father died, leaving his children wealthy, and her brother

was advanced from post to post, until he was practically a despot here.

"In the old countries the English and Scotch were having trouble, and Leroy saw fit to vent his animosity on the peaceable Scotch residents here.

"The latter were brave and hardy men, and would not quietly submit to imposition, particularly when it was practiced in such an open manner, accompanied by sneers and actual cruelties.

"Soon the discontent became general. From being discontented they became incensed, at being so deeply wronged.

"Leon Magruder, being so nearly related to Gaspard Leroy, was nominated to visit the dictator, and remonstrate with him. Leon accepted the commission—the fatal commission!

"He saw his brother-in-law, and upbraided him for his conduct. The two men had never liked each other, and a hot and stormy interview was brought to a close by Leon's rushing out of doors, exclaiming:

"'You have been warned! Do not blame me if, having sown the wind, you reap the whirlwind!'

"The Scotch were loyal! God in Heaven knows that! They did not wish to resist the authority of the crown, even though vested in such as Gaspard Leroy. But what could they do?

"Indignity followed indignity in quick succession, and at last—there is no need of telling how it came about—the brave Scots struck to preserve their liberty.

"A cry of treason was raised the next day after that blow had fallen.

"Heaven knows that no thought of treason had entered the heart of a single one of the Scots. They had been abused, trampled upon, spat upon, and had resented it in the only way open to them—by force of arms—for the courts of justice were closed against them.

"Leon Magruder was arrested.

"It was claimed that he had been the leader of the mob, that he had fired their passions, nursed their natural enmity to the English crown, that he had been the ring-leader. But he was not, and knew nothing of it—I swear it before high Heaven.

"I know this to be true.

"But he was arrested, tried on the charge of treason, and was sentenced to be hung, by his brother-in-law.

"In vain his wife pleaded for his life. She had no sympathy with us, was English in every feeling, but she loved her husband and could not let him die without trying to save him.

"For his wife's sake Leon had refused to have anything to do with the movement which he guessed—but did not know—was afoot among his countrymen.

"I know that I once asked him to join us, but he replied: 'No, that I cannot do, for my wife is English; and my children—my darlings—I must think for them!'

"When he knew that no mercy would be shown him, that he was to be hung like a dog, even though he was innocent, the Magruder blood within his veins was aroused and heated to a boiling point, and he swore to be avenged—if not by his own hands by those of another.

"His wife heard that he had spoken of the children in a certain manner, and became frightened. She suddenly disappeared, and returned only on the morning of the day appointed for the execution.

"I had held secret meetings with my countrymen, and we had arranged a plan of rescue.

"But they adopted precautions that baffled us completely, and we gave it up, knowing that our game could not succeed. Had there been a ghost of a show we should not have hesitated in making an attack."

"Surrounded by a guard too strong to be resisted, Leon Magruder was led out to die, to be hung publicly, as a spectacle—they said as a warning to those who were traitors at heart.

"Well, I was in the crowd, and, with breaking heart, saw him advance beneath the cross-beam. His step was firm, he showed no fear, and was prepared to die like a man—like a Magruder!

"His features were set and resolute, and his eyes flashed—not with rage—but with calm and contemptuous hatred, when they rested on the man who had set up for his judge, but was in reality his assassin.

"His eyes wandered over the crowd that had gathered to see him die. I held up my hand to attract his attention.

"He saw me and smiled.

"One moment he seemed to hesitate, and then in the Scotch tongue he uttered the motto of the Magruders:

"'Victory or death for a Magruder!'

"The eyes of the few Scots flashed, but they remained silent.

"Then he called me by a pet name, known only to us, and, in the Scotch tongue, cried:

"'Into your hands I commit the cause of vengeance! This man has murdered me; let him be as cruelly torn from life as I will soon be. And let it be the hand of my son who lays him low. To your care I commit my Leon. Bring him up to hate the English, tell him the story of my wrongs until he knows them by heart; until he burns to avenge me, until his Magruder blood is molten lava in his veins. Then—then—let the blow fall.'

"I swore to carry out his scheme of revenge.

"You are that Leon—the son of whom he spoke. I sought you, but found that your mother had secreted you somewhere.

"I forced my way into her presence some days later, determined to wrest from her the secret of your hiding-place, and found her on her death bed.

"I saw the black cap drawn over your father's face, saw the rope choke him to death, saw him writhe and struggle until life was extinct; and I saw your mother, pale, crazed, broken-hearted, when she drew her last breath.

"I left that death-chamber with my heart turned into stone, all save one corner, and that was molten iron, boiling, seething, concealing in it my life-purpose—that of finding you, and educating you to become the avenger of your father.

"I searched far and wide for you, but of you could never find a trace. I tracked to her hiding place and found your sister May, and stole her away.

"You were seen, when on the island, by an old negro, for many years a servitor in your father's family. He recognized you from your looks, and you know the attempts made to capture you.

"You also know now the history of your life, and why I have brought you to Canada.

"And knowing this, can you refuse to carry out your father's dying wishes? Can you refuse to avenge him by slaying his murderer?"

CHAPTER XXVI.

CHEATED BY DEATH.

SPELL-BOUND had Leon listened to the recital of his uncle.

As he listened, his indignation had been aroused, his blood had run more swiftly, his eyes had flashed.

And as Roswell—or Magruder—asked the questions with which he finished speaking, his face had lighted with pleasure, at noting the expression on Leon's.

"You will avenge him."

In an intense whisper Roswell said this, bending very close to Leon. The latter started.

Certainly he felt an animosity toward Gaspard Leroy, but ——. No, no, it would be impossible for him to commit murder in cold blood.

His very soul recoiled and shrank within him at the bare thought. He remained silent, his head bent.

Raising his eyes a minute later, he directed them to the face of his uncle. That face was—oh, how stern, and set, and savage!

Leon remembered the awful threat made by his uncle, and a terrible chill ran through his frame.

"You do not answer."

Roswell spoke in a hard, cold, metallic tone, evidently displeased that Leon had not promptly said:

"I will slay him—I will avenge my father's murder!"

"You do not answer," his uncle repeated.

"I must have time to think," Leon returned.

"Think?" and Roswell started up angrily, and commenced striding to and fro again. "Ye gods! is it possible that this is a Magruder—that he has the old blood in his veins—that he has heard the story of his father's wrong—that he has heard repeated his father's dying words, and still wants time to think?"

Roswell's concluding words were in a most bitter and scornful tone, and cut Leon to the quick.

"Sir," he said, "you must remember that my life has not been passed in your company, but has been passed among those who have taught me to look with horror upon murder."

"Murder? It would not be murder to slay him. It would be only Heaven's just retribution!"

"I cannot see it so——"

"Silence!" hissed Roswell. "Do not expose your cowardice to me, or I may be tempted to strike you down!"

"You must hear me," Leon said, firmly. "If I am a Magruder or not, I have as much courage as you boast of the Magruders possessing. But this story is new to me. You say you are my uncle; so is the man you would have me slay."

"He is not—he is your father's murderer! Oh, kind Heaven! have I spent my life in dreaming of revenge, have I waited for this hour, only to be balked at last?"

"He is my mother's brother?"

"He is. But when your mother married my brother, she became a Magruder, not he a Leroy."

For nearly an hour after that no word passed between them.

Leon was in a quandary.

His uncle's earnestness, his manner of speaking of his father's death as the result of a vindictive feeling, could not but impress him, could not but make him resentful toward Gaspard Leroy.

Still, educated as he had been, he could not bring himself to contemplate the slaying of a human being.

No, that he would never do.

So he decided in his own mind. No matter how guilty Gaspard Leroy might be, his punishment must be left to a just God.

Leon watched his uncle covertly.

He had no doubt whatever in his mind that Roswell would act upon his threats in case Leon refused to do his bidding.

What was to be done?

There was but one thing, so far as Leon could see, and that was to make his escape from his uncle's custody.

But this would be no easy matter, closely watched as he was.

Hitting upon a desperate plan, he resolved to appear to enter into his uncle's ideas, and then, when in the street, make a sudden dash for liberty, and in case of necessity, apply to the police for protection.

Having so resolved, he called Roswell's attention, and gravely informed him that he was prepared to avenge his father's death.

It seemed like blasphemy when Roswell thanked Heaven that Leon had resolved to imbrue his hands in human blood.

"I knew you were a Magruder in blood and at heart," said Captain Roswell. "Your education had warped you somewhat, but blood will always tell!"

Blind, infatuated Captain Roswell!

He thought that Leon was warped.

He could not see that he himself, and not Leon, was warped in mind.

Brave, noble, generous by nature, his troubles, his brother's wrongs, had caused a complete change, and made it impossible for him to think of more than one thing—revenge!

"I will arrange the plan for the consummation of this act of vengeance, and supply the means," Roswell told Leon. "All that is required of you will be to strike the fatal blow."

When he went out, Jack Bolen was called in to remain with Leon. Roswell did not mean to lose his revenge, and Leon must be watched until the last moment.

But, while Leon fretted and fumed and chafed inwardly at seeing no present chance of escape, a more powerful-looking hand than his avenged his dead father.

In crossing a street a few moments after they saw him, Gaspard Leroy had been knocked down by a runaway horse and killed.

Oh! what a feeling of relief crept into Leon's heart when he heard this from his uncle's lips, who bitterly added:

"Death has robbed us! We have no further business here. Let us return to the vessel."

CHAPTER XXVII.

AND LAST.

THREE days later the Hawk ran in, and was fastened to the rude dock in the little bay.

May had come down to meet her, and when Leon jumped ashore, he did not hesitate, but took the fair girl in his arms and kissed her fondly.

"You know then——"

"That you are my sister? Yes," and then Leon laughed lightly.

"I thought you knew it the other day, or I would not have returned to kiss you," she said. "What a bold, forward thing you must have thought me."

Leon flushed and felt sheepish.

He was very glad that she could not read his thoughts, and know all of his reflections concerning her.

Arm in arm, happy at finding in a hitherto lonely world a near relation, they strolled away.

And when May asked why Roswell had carried him to Canada, Leon told her the whole story, as related by Roswell, describing what had followed, including his extrication from a terrible dilemma by the death of their mother's brother.

May had a fragmentary and disconnected knowledge of a portion of this history, but had she known that Roswell's purpose was to make Leon commit murder, she would have released him when confined on the island, no matter what the cost might have been to herself.

While conversing earnestly, and comparing their memories of their sainted mother, they were startled by loud cries of alarm, and a great commotion.

They paused, and turned their faces toward where the Hawk lay.

For a minute a terrible hush followed, broken then by a hoarse shout of dismay.

Then they saw a long train of sparks floating in the air, just beyond the position of the Hawk.

"That comes from the smoke-stack of a steamer!" cried Leon. "Of a steamer that burns wood! Can my note have reached them?—can it be the Sprite?"

Now the shouting grew more general, grew louder, more confused, and the steamer drew nearer to the schooner.

And then——

Crack!

Crack!

Crack!

"It is the revenue officers!" exclaimed May, clasping her hands. "Oh, uncle—uncle—Leon, our uncle will be in the front of the fight, and he will surely be killed."

Crack!

Crack!

Leaving May there at a safe distance, sheltered behind a rock so that no stray bullet might reach her, Leon bounded toward the shore.

As he flew along he heard the hoarse orders of Roswell for his men to stand firm—heard the death cries of the falling smugglers—heard the terrible and meaning crack of numerous revolvers and rifles.

It was terrible.

He reached the shore only after the fray was ended.

May's fears had proved truthful; Roswell had been in the front during the fight, had received a bullet in his body, and fallen.

Immediately on their leader's fall the others had surrendered.

Roswell—for so we have always called him heretofore—was still breathing when Leon reached his side.

The dying man recognized his nephew, and a smile crossed his face.

"Good-bye," he faintly said, extending his hand, which Leon caught and held. "Good-bye. I am glad that before I died we met, knew each other, and that I found you a true Magruder."

Leon continued to hold his hand, but it was the hand of a corpse, for, with those quoted words, the smuggler captain breathed his last.

It was, indeed, the Sprite which had surprised the smugglers.

After reading Leon's note, Mr. Starr had called on George for his advice. As soon as arrangements could be made, and a force of revenue officers got together, they had sailed for Fox Isles to liberate Leon. The result we are already acquainted with.

It could not but be wearisome to the reader to detail minutely all the events which followed, as a matter of course.

The survivors of the smuggler band were taken to Milwaukee, and having been tried, were punished in accordance with the law relating to their offenses.

That day had been one of surprises on all sides; but perhaps one of the most agreeably surprised was George Starr, on finding that May was Leon's sister.

He experienced a sense of relief at once. Had she not been Leon's sister, he would have kept concealed the impression May made on his heart, for fear that he would be, as the saying goes, "treading on Leon's toes."

But, being Leon's sister, George felt that the field was clear, and if

her heart was not yet possessed by another, he should do his best to win a place in it.

And George was successful.

That simple sentence tells the story as well as a whole chapter.

It was not a century later, that on a lovely afternoon, George and May—the beautiful unknown—stood up before the altar and were made man and wife.

And thus was the friendship between Leon and George more closely cemented.

It is years ago since the occurrence of the incidents of this story. In Milwaukee still live all the principal characters in our story, any of whom—were you to meet them—would gladly vouch for the incidents of the tale of THE BOY PILOT.



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